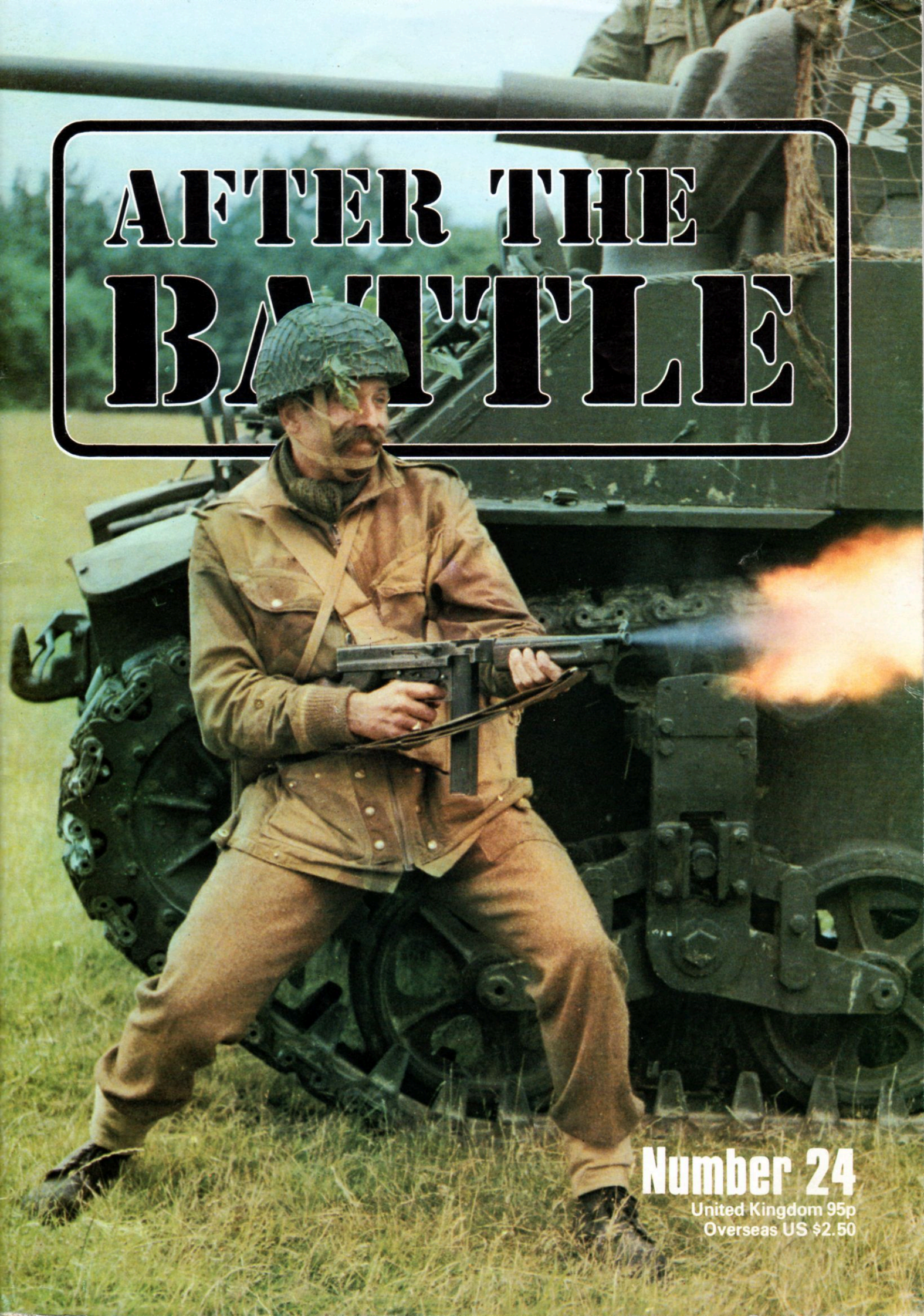

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Front Cover: Mike Ross of Military Marine, co-founder of the Battle Re-enactment Associate, photographed by his brother Kevin enjoying himself firing a .45 Thompson sub-machine gun during the filming of *It's all a Game*.

Centre Pages: The triumphal end to a successful operation. The RAF sub-aqua team pose at Coaling Island, Gibraltar with the propeller recovered from the Liberator in which Polish General Sikorski died in 1943. *L-R rear:* SAC Taff Bird (Cranwell), J/T Lockhart Campbell (Kinloss), Sergeant Brian Morley (Halton), SAC Nick Lewis (Cranwell), SAC Phil Nobbs (North Coates), T/A Hedley Watson (Halton), Corporal Graham Abrahams (Cranwell), Sergeant Terry Newcombe (Halton), Flying Officer Jim Arnold (Halton). *Front:* T/A Gary Tate (Halton), Corporal Dave Hewitt (Halton), T/A Terry Robins (Halton), J/T 'Barney' Barnes (Halton), T/A Ian Miller (Halton) and Captain of the *Fantasia* Mel Jones.

Back Cover: The refurbished Buffalo on its concrete plinth beside the River Maas in Belgium (M. Janssen).

Acknowledgements: The editor is indebted to Dr. Miroslav Ivanov author of *The Assassination of Heydrich* and his publisher, Hart-Davis MacGibbon London, to quote extracts.

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THE ASSASSINATI

On September 27, 1941, SS-Gruppenfuehrer Reinhard Heydrich arrived in Prague as Acting Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia. This was the new name for that part of Czechoslovakia (less Slovakia) which had been declared by Hitler following his take over of the country in stages during 1938-39. At first, Hitler had installed the moderate Baron Konstantin von Neurath as Protektor but, after the Czechs proved an unwilling and unco-operative element in Hitler's new empire, Heydrich was appointed his replacement as the new hard-line governor.

As Chief of the Security Police (which included the Gestapo), the ambitious Heydrich was already aspiring to oust his superior Himmler and, proudly, Hitler had even named him as being groomed as his own successor. When he arrived at Hradcany Castle in Prague, Heydrich began a clever campaign to win the co-operation of the people. On the one hand, the velvet glove offered extra rations, holidays and even the world's first social security programme as rewards for hard work but the new measures were backed by the iron fist for those that rebelled: imprisonment, concentration camps and the firing squad.

The London-based Czechoslovakian Government in exile was deeply divided over what action should be taken by them. On the one hand, there were those who pressed for immediate action against the Germans but there were also those who said that the reprisals which would surely follow any attack would have severe repercussions on the civilian population and that, even if Heydrich was eliminated, his successor might be much worse.

Nevertheless fearful of the apparent success of Heydrich's insidious new measures to counter the rebellious spirit of the Czechs, the Government-in-exile, backed by British Intelligence, decided to prepare a counter stroke.

The conference initiating the proposal was held in London on October 3, 1941. At this meeting, Colonel Moravec described the worsening conditions in Czechoslovakia heralded by Heydrich's declaration of a State of Emergency immediately on his appointment six days earlier. A swift blow to the Nazis was essential, explained Moravec, and it could either be directed against Karl Hermann Frank, the Nazi Secretary of State or Reinhard Heydrich. The death of either would be an example and an encouragement to those suffering under the German yoke. The ideal date for an attack would be later that month, on October 28, when the nation celebrated the founding of the Czechoslovakian republic. The plan, if successful, would not only free the Czechs from their overlord but strike a tremendous psychological blow to the over-confident Nazis riding the crest of their victorious wave over Europe. Present at the meeting were the two Czechs selected for the task: Sergeant Josef Gabcik and Sergeant Svoboda. Their departure date was fixed for October 10.

When Hitler had overrun Western Europe in 1940, the remnants of those armies which had fought with the Allies against Germany and were fortunate enough to reach England, were formed into various Free corps. There were the Free French, the Free Poles, the Free Norwegians . . . and the Free Czechs. The latter were based in the grounds of Cholmondeley Castle (pronounced Chumley), six miles north of Whitchurch in Cheshire. It was from here that the two men had been selected for the almost-suicidal mission; two men who were not hastily-trained killers or professional assassins but patriots prepared to carry through their task regardless of the odds. However, before the planned departure date arrived, Sergeant Svoboda was injured in a training exercise and Jan Kubis was appointed to take his place.

Jan Kubis had been stationed with Josef Gabcik at Cholmondeley for more than a year, both having met in a Warsaw refugee camp and had reached England via a roundabout route by joining the French Foreign Legion. They were close friends and spent most of their weekends staying with the Ellison family in their red-brick house on the edge of Ightfield, a small village four miles south-east of Whitchurch. Mrs Jessie Ellison had befriended the two boys in Whitchurch one day and invited them to her home although perhaps it was her two pretty teenage daughters who provided an additional attraction for the lonely young Czechs singled out for the special mission.

The delay in the mounting of the operation

Top right: **September 28, 1941 in the forecourt of Hradcany Castle, Prague. Reinhard Heydrich (right) assumes command of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Karl Hermann Frank Secretary of State on the left. (Camera Press)** *Right:* **The courtyard today.**

ON OF REINHARD HEYDRICH

Above: **Czechoslovakian troops, under training.** *Bottom:* **The present-day memorial to the Free Czechs in the grounds of Cholmondeley Castle at Malpas, Cheshire.**

gave a few more weeks for the organisation of the operation codenamed ANTHROPOID. The two Czechs finally took off from Tangmere airfield at 10.00 p.m. on December 28, 1941. Together with them in the Halifax, piloted by Flight-Lieutenant R. C. Hockey, were two other groups, 'Silver A' and 'B'.

'Silver A' comprised First Lieutenant Alfred Bartos, Sergeant Josef Valcik and Jiri Potucek and 'Silver B', Jan Zemek and Vladimir Skadna. They had the task of getting in touch with the Czech underground movement as contact by the resistance with London had been broken by the Germans.

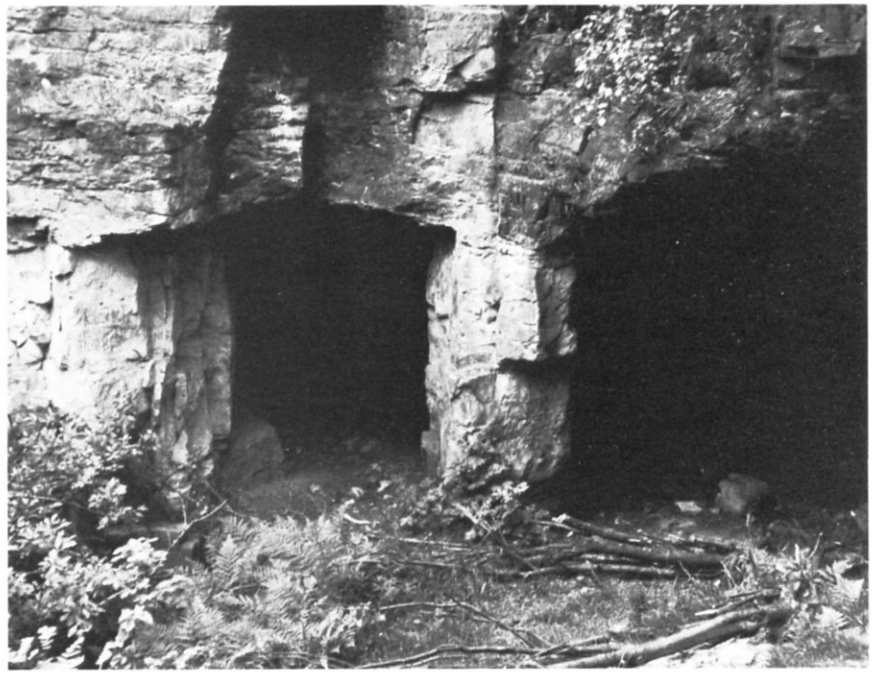
The Halifax crossed the French coast at 10.49 p.m. and, two hours later, was successfully shaking off German fighters over Darmstadt in Germany. Continuing almost exactly due east, the route then ran via Bayreuth (1.32 p.m.) to Pilsen which was reached at 2.15 a.m. Nine minutes later Kubis and Gabcik parachuted to earth. On his return, the pilot reported that the original dropping zone was covered with fog and that the ANTHROPOID group had been dropped about five miles south of Pilsen.

Above: **The house (unoccupied when we visited it in April 1978) at Ightfield, Shropshire where Josef Gabcik and Jan Kubis spent their free time during training. Their bedroom was the top window on the right.**

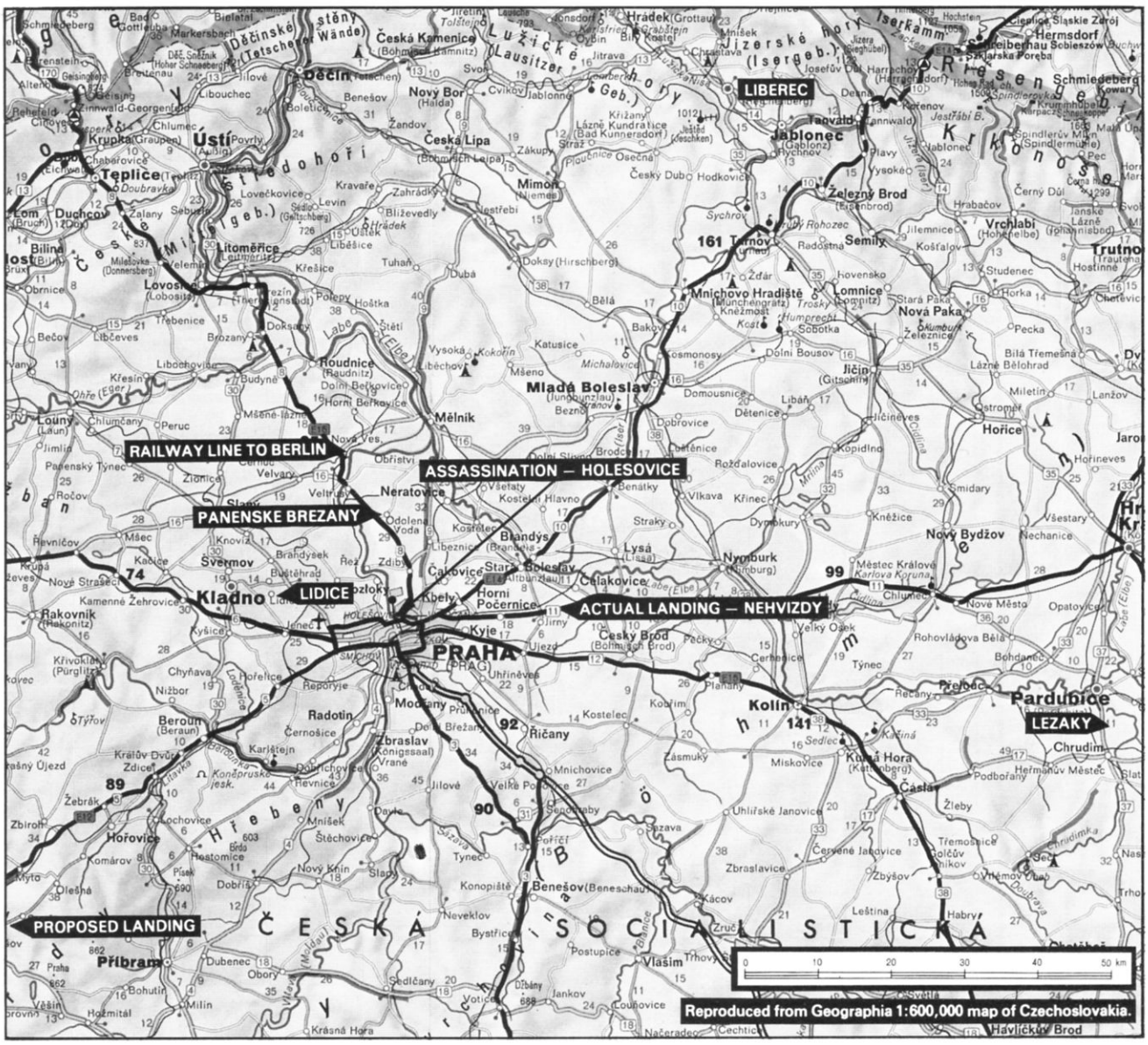
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The ground was covered in deep snow as Jan and Josef made their landing. Although they were unaware of it at the time, they had been dropped some seventy miles north-east of the planned spot and were now just twelve miles from the city of Prague. Their landing had also not been unnoticed. A local gamekeeper at Nehvizdy, Antonin Sedlacek, woken by the sound of a low-flying aircraft, looked out to see a parachute floating down behind the cemetery. Next morning he found trampled snow and hidden parachutes and footprints leading away to a hill a mile away which was crowned with a copse. Following the trail to the trees which surrounded an old quarry, he came across the two men standing outside a cave in the rocks. Jan and Josef, although wary of the stranger, decided the best policy would be to trust the visitor. He told them where they were and of their luck in discovering the best hiding place for miles. Sedlacek offered to bring them food and to find out if their arrival had been noticed by anyone else.

Because they had jumped from only 900 feet it was a foregone conclusion that other villagers would be woken by the four-engined bomber and the fact that parachutists were in the area soon became common knowledge. The local miller, Baumann, soon discovered their hiding place independently from



The cave in the quarry at Nehvizdy where Jan and Josef sheltered after their landing by parachute as it appeared in 1977.



The Moravec second-floor flat (arrowed) on Biskupcova Street. today.

Sedlacek for, although it was ideal, it was also the first place anyone would search. Warning Jan and Josef of their vulnerability, Baumann contacted the local resistance movement and by January the pair had made their way to Prague.

There they were hidden in a variety of places until they reached the safe house of the Moravec family — in reality a second-floor flat on Biskupcova Street. When in Prague they made contact with underground leaders, notably Jan Zelenka, a local schoolmaster known as 'Uncle Hajsky', to formulate a successful plan for the attempt on Heydrich's life.

During February Jan and Josef made contact through 'Uncle Hajsky' with Josef Valcik of the 'Silver A' group who had established cover for himself as a barman at the Veselka Hotel in Pardubice, fifty-odd miles east of Prague, an ideal place to gather information as it was frequented by high German officials. Another source of information on Heydrich's movements was provided by one of the Czech staff in Hradcany Castle, overlooking the River Moldau (now called the Vltava) where the Reichprotektor had his office. However the castle itself was heavily guarded and Jan and Josef were forced to look elsewhere for a place to mount their operation.

One idea they examined was to attack Heydrich in his private train during one of his frequent visits to Berlin. The line to Germany followed the River Vltava northwards and two possibilities presented themselves. Firstly they discovered that the train always had to stop at the station in the Royal Park, in the northern suburbs of Prague, where the branch line joined the main route north, waiting for a clear signal. Just under a quarter of a mile beyond the station, thick trees provided excellent cover for a man with an anti-tank rifle to fire a shell at Heydrich's carriage. However when they carried out a rehearsal of the plan, they found the train gathered speed so quickly that it passed in a blur, too fast to recognise the correct compartment.

Then further north in the mountainous border region beyond Liberec, where the train was certain to be travelling slowly, another spot was reconnoitred. This time it was planned to place explosives on the line to blow up the train and, although a dummy run was carried out on a troop train, this was only

Above: **Heydrich is visited by his SS chief Reichsfuehrer Heinrich Himmler on October 29, 1941 at Hradcany Castle (Camera Press).**

The stairway is now part of the Czech President's quarters barred to visitors.

derailed with light casualties. It was obvious that attacks on Heydrich's train would be a hit and miss affair so Jan and Josef began looking elsewhere for a suitable place for an ambush.

Heydrich lived with his wife Lina and his children, Klaus and Heide, in a country chateau in Panenske Brezany, a village fifteen miles north of Prague and commuted daily to the city in a Model 320 Mercedes driven by SS-Oberscharfuehrer Klein, his personal driver. The car came to fetch him at the chateau around nine o'clock; it then drove through Panenske Brezany village, climbed a hill past a second chateau which also belonged to Heydrich and then entered a dense wood for about one hundred yards before reaching open country. There an escort car would join the Mercedes and the convoy would drive at speed along the tree-lined road before joining Route 8 for the city. The total journey took forty-five minutes.

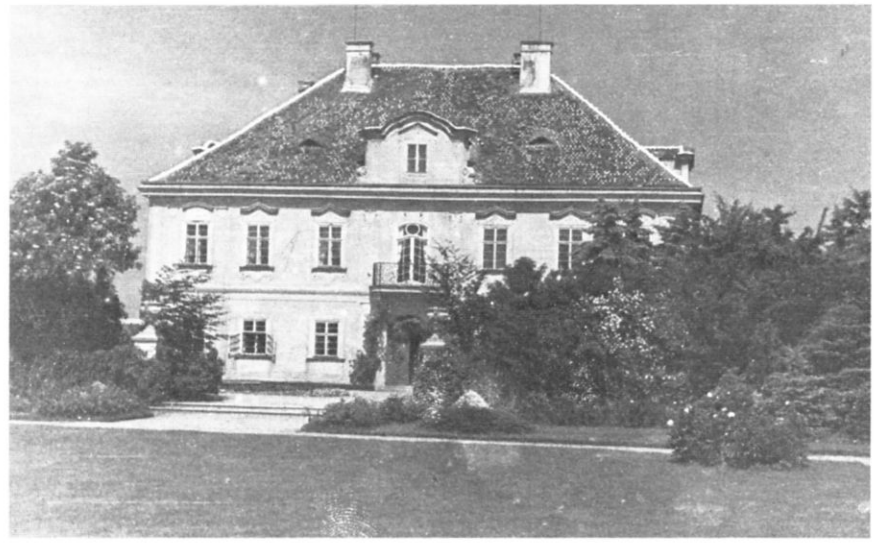
The chateau, like the castle in Prague, was closely guarded but the daily car journey, during which time Heydrich sat in the front seat of an open touring car, could possibly be used to advantage. Exploring the whole route on bicycles, Jan and Josef found that the straight tree-lined road leading from the chateau to the main road offered distinct possibilities. Heydrich's love of speed meant that the car often reached a hundred miles an hour on this stretch leaving the escort car far behind. The trees by the road could easily support a steel cable across the road to stop or wreck the car and they would be on hand to finish off the occupants with their pistols. However the location offered no chance of subsequent escape. Their bicycles would easily be overtaken by the escort car and the open countryside provided no form of concealment.

Nevertheless, although the plan was rejected, the car journey seemed to provide the key and Jan and Josef persevered with their examination of other likely spots. It was during their return to Prague on a reconnaissance trip of the route, as they descended the Kirchmayerstrasse (now the Rude armady) in the northern suburbs, that they came upon the perfect location. Here the cobble-stoned road turned sharply right as it joined Klein Holeschowitzerstrasse (now V Holesovickach) on its way down to the river. Although the road was wide and double tram lines ran down the centre, cars negotiating the hairpin bend had to slow down to at least ten or twelve miles an hour. Additionally a nearby tram stop would provide an excellent reason for them to be standing near the corner. The German's own edict, issued when they occupied Prague, changing the traffic from the left to the right, would also mean the car would be close to the inside bend of the hairpin. It was perfect, almost made for the job, and excitedly the two set about planning the attack in detail.

In all, four men would be involved in the actual assassination. Josef Valcik's cover had been blown in Pardubice and he joined Kubis and Gabcik in Prague together with Adolf Opalka who had been dropped by parachute on March 28 as one of the three-man 'Out Distance' Group. (Altogether, seventeen Czechs were flown from England and parachuted into the country during March and April 1942 for various missions.)

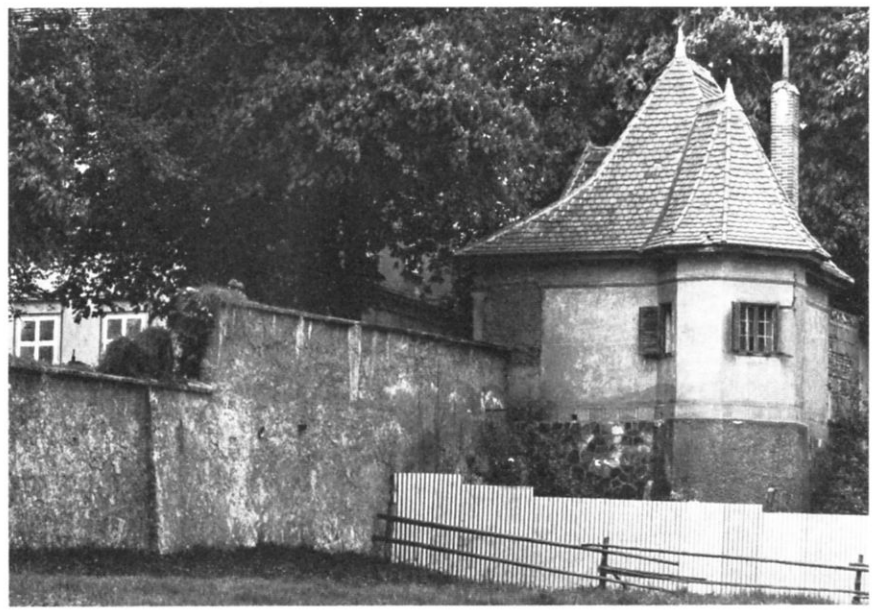
It had now been four months since Jan and Josef had arrived in Czechoslovakia and the underground's informer in Hradcany Castle had already told them that Heydrich's duties in Bohemia and Moravia were shortly to end. He was due to be sent to France following a meeting with Hitler in Berlin on May 27.

There was no time to lose. Final approval for the operation was radioed from London to Prague on May 20 and the date for the attempt fixed for seven days later. Although the time of Heydrich's departure for Berlin on the 27th was not known, it was assumed he would follow his usual routine and drive to his office early that morning before leaving.



Above: **A pre-war view of the chateau at Panenske Brezany taken over by Heydrich for his private residence in 1941.**

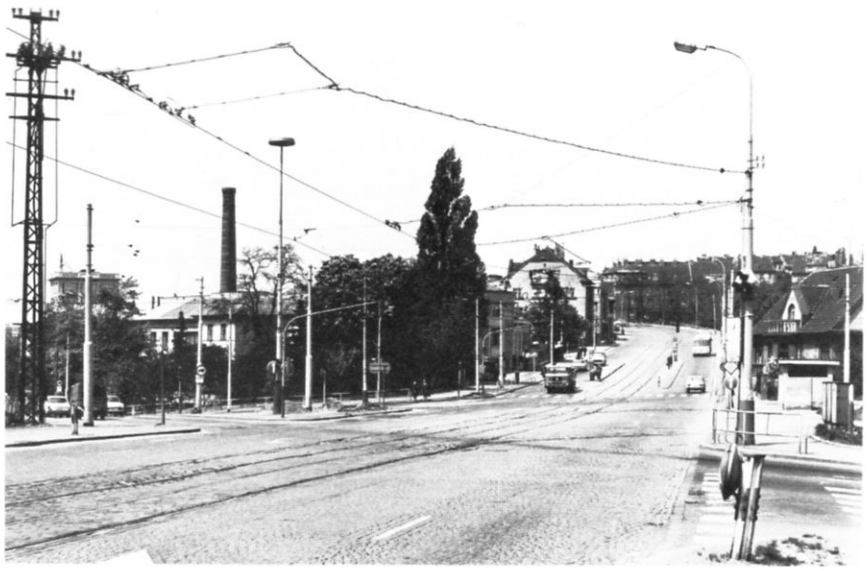
Above and below: **The chateau is now used as a 'research centre' and all photography of the building is forbidden. These are the best views possible under the circumstances.**



THE ASSASSINATION

At 8.00 a.m. Jan Kubis and Josef Gabcik set out to cross the city for the Holesovice junction. Each was carrying a leather briefcase containing the weapons for the attack. Jan had two primed grenades converted from British No.73 Hand Anti-tank grenades. The standard grenade had a tin-plate body 9.5in long and 3.25in in diameter containing 3.25lbs of Polar Ammon Gelatin Dynamite — a nitro-glycerine-based explosive. The grenade was fitted with the No.247 fuze made of black bakelite which is often referred to as the 'all-ways fuze' designed to function on impact irrespective of how the grenade landed. Total weight was 4lbs and the grenade was declared obsolete in October 1941, two months prior to the parachute drop in December. However the grenades Jan carried were a conversion of the standard grenade made from the upper third portion only. The filling was prevented from falling out by covering the open end with adhesive tape and then binding the whole with tape for added security. The effect of the conversion was to cut the size and the weight to just over 1lb which would make the device more easy to throw and conceal. Josef had a disassembled MKII 9mm Sten No.FF209 with one spare magazine and, for some unknown reason, a No.73 grenade without the detonator. Both men, in addition, carried .32 calibre Model 1910 Colt semi-automatic pistols.

Collecting their bicycles en route, by 8.30 a.m. they had reached the crossroads. Valcik was already waiting for them at the tram stop. It was his job to stand further up the road and to signal to Jan and Josef on the corner when Heydrich's car was approaching. Opalka was to keep a look out from the opposite side of the road. Propping their bicycles on the opposite side of the road against two lamp posts, they all took up their positions. Gabcik, with the assembled Sten now under his raincoat, stood near the corner and Kubis a few yards further downhill. According to his usual timetable they could expect the Reichsprotektor around 9.30 a.m. Time dragged by. No. 3 and No. 14 trams came and went, stopping to collect or set down passengers, but no one took any notice of the two young men waiting on the corner.

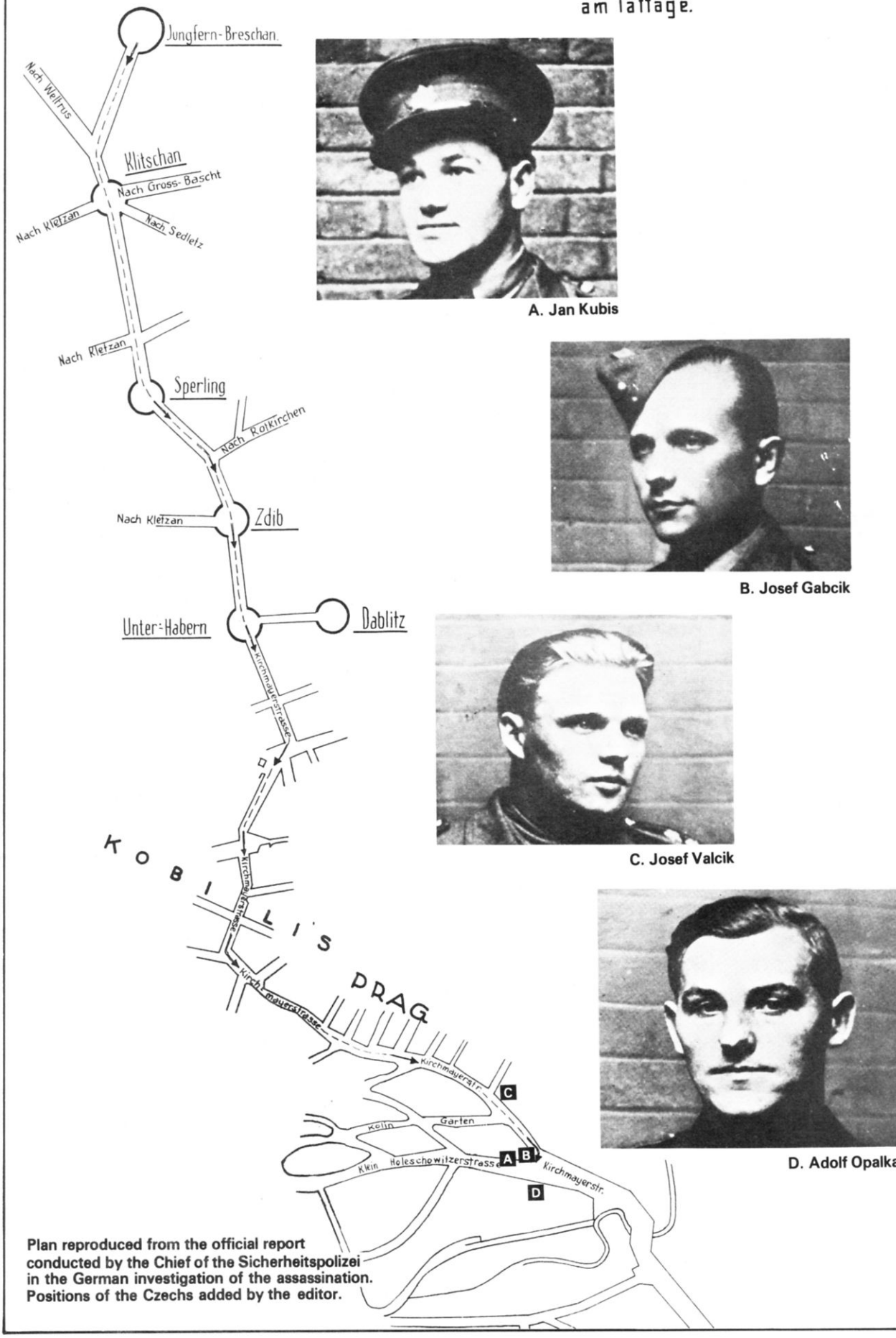


Top: **One of the many photographs taken by the SD investigating team after the attack on Heydrich's car. This one shows the reconstruction of the scene with a bicycle and attache case leaning against the lamp-post where Jan Kubis propped his own machine (see the crime plan on page 12). The damaged Mercedes can just be seen below the factory chimney. Klein drove down the hill in the background and turned right into Klein Holeschowitzerstrasse.** *Above:* **The same view thirty-five years later.**

Fifteen miles away, Reinhard Heydrich was strolling in his walled garden with his family. It was a lovely May day and he was not in a hurry. His dark-green Mercedes-Benz, glinting in the sunlight, stood waiting on the drive with the attentive Klein. It was 10.00 a.m.

The tension at the Holesovice bend was unbearable. Heydrich should have been along by now. Opalka crossed the road to talk to Jan and Josef. Trams continued to grind up the hill to the nearby hospital. Opalka returned to his post. If Jan and Josef stood there much longer without catching a tram, someone in the experimental institute opposite might get suspicious. What had gone wrong? Suddenly Valcik's mirror flashed. Heydrich was coming. As Gabcik moved forward with the Sten, he heard a tram rumble up the street behind him. As the Mercedes rounded the bend, Gabcik flung aside the coat covering the sub-machine gun, raised it to his shoulder and, aiming at the front seat passenger, pulled the trigger.

Skizze 1: Weg des SS-Obergruppenführers Heydrich am Tattage.



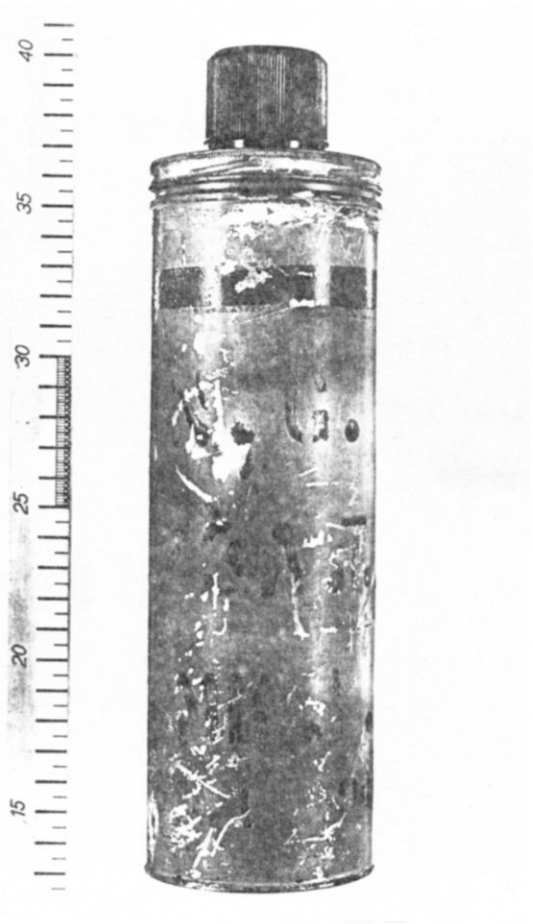
A. Jan Kubis

B. Josef Gabcik

C. Josef Valcik

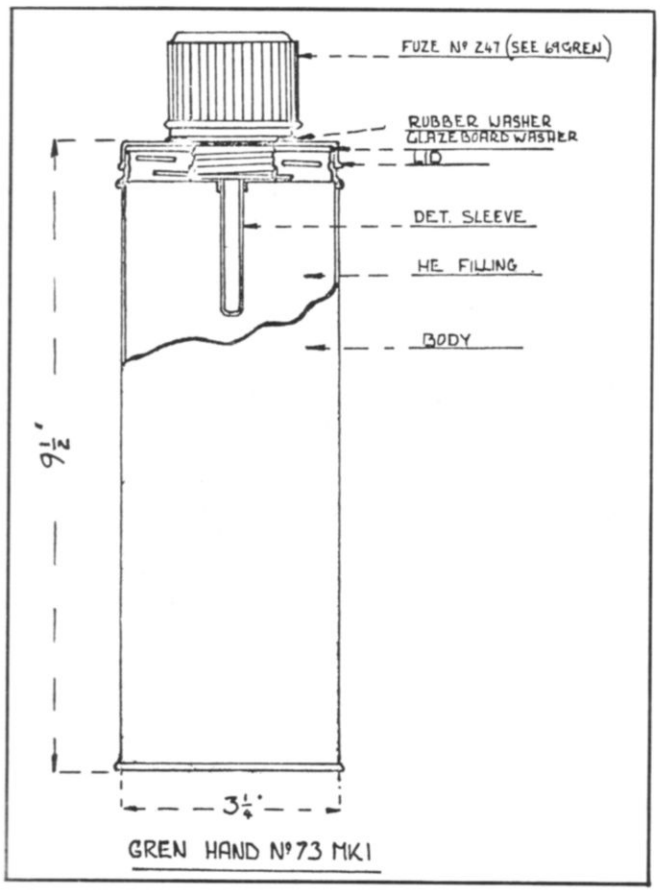
D. Adolf Opalka

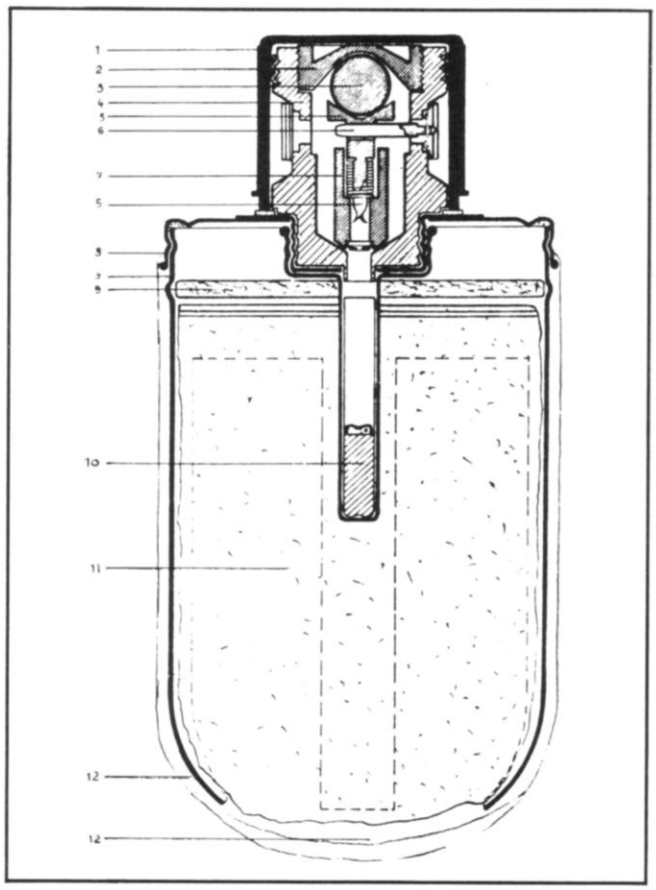
Plan reproduced from the official report conducted by the Chief of the Sicherheitspolizei in the German investigation of the assassination. Positions of the Czechs added by the editor.

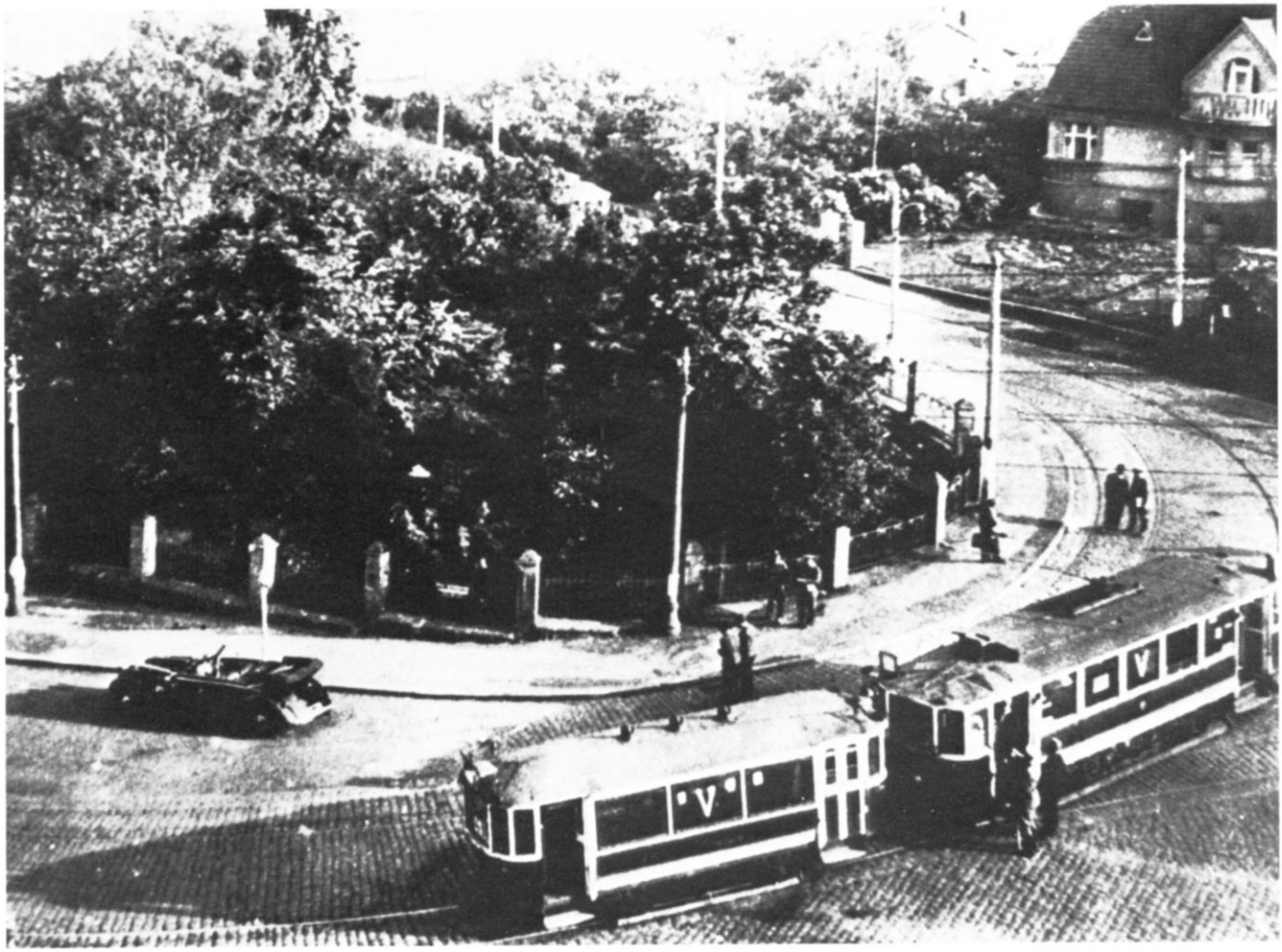


Above left: **A German photograph included in the SD report of a British Type 73 anti-tank hand grenade and** *above right* **as modified for the attack on Heydrich. This is the unprimed grenade recovered from Josef's briefcase.**

Below left: **A diagram showing the make-up of the grenade supplied to us by the Army School of Ammunition. The device was painted buff with a red band indicating high explosive.** *Below right:* **A German diagram of the modified grenade.**







Above: **Early the following morning (note the long shadows from the east), the Mercedes and tram are still in position while various officials examine the scene for clues (Keystone).** *Below:* **After the war the angle of the bend was altered slightly to make it less dangerous — photo taken 1977.**

Kubis watching from a few yards further down the road heard the tram approaching. As it neared the corner he saw Josef step into the road and aim at the green Mercedes as it came into view. At the same instant Opalka ran across the road in front of the car. Waiting for the burst of fire, he gripped his own grenade inside the briefcase. To his utter amazement the car passed Josef without a shot being fired. The vehicle with its two occupants continued past him absolutely unscathed.

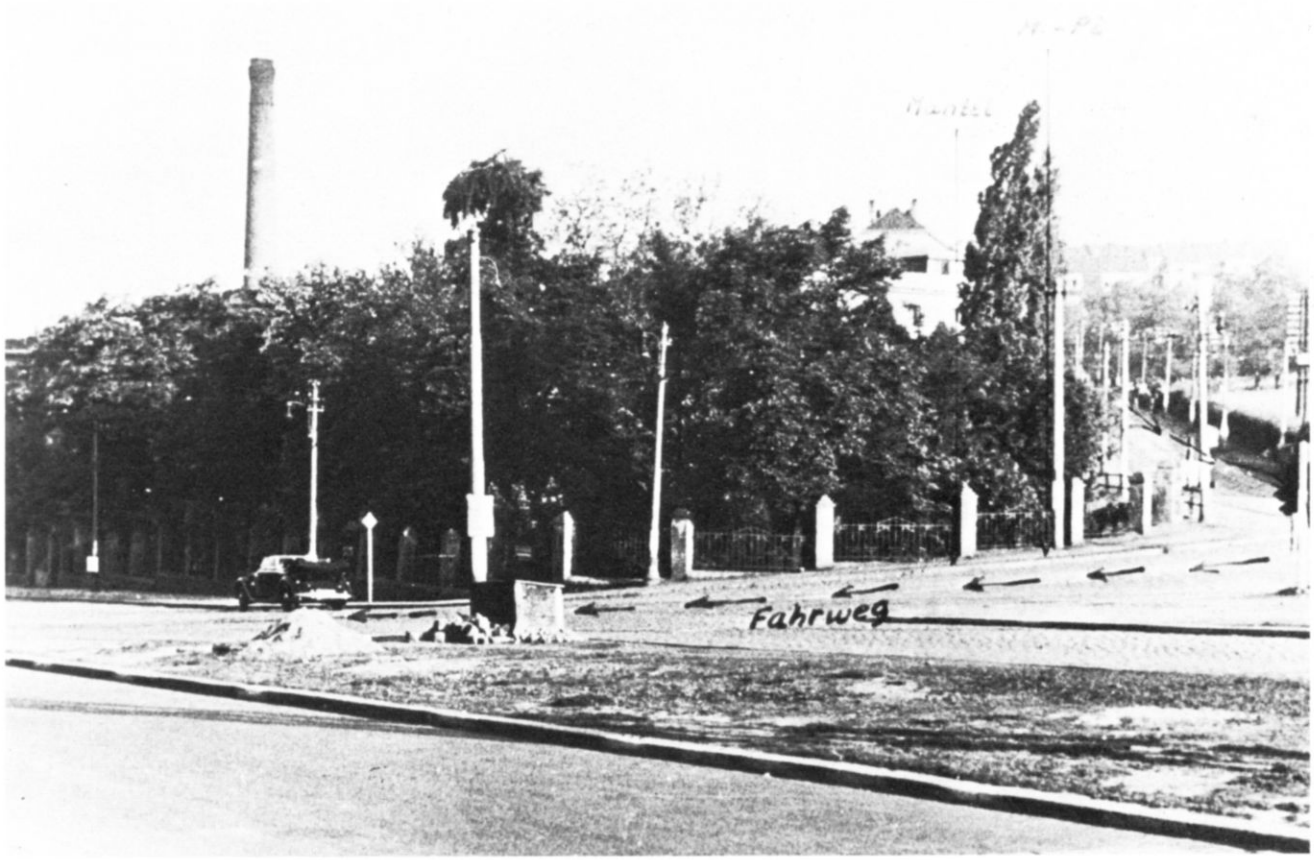
Moving with lightning speed, keeping hold of the tape which automatically pulled the pin as it unwound from the grenade, Kubis flung it at the rear of the car. It exploded as it touched the rear nearside panel, bursting the tyre and blowing a huge hole in the bodywork. At the same time Jan felt splinters strike his own chest and face.

One can imagine the silence which followed the explosion, the action frozen in the minds of those present. Then, suddenly, everything came to life like a still frame of a film suddenly set in motion. Heydrich and Klein emerged from the car, seemingly untouched, the latter's pistol already freed from its holster. The tram with its windows shattered disgorged its screaming, shouting passengers. Jan ran across the road and mounted his bicycle just as a second tram ground to a halt. Pedalling like mad down the hill, Jan shot down Kirchmayerstrasse and disappeared from view.

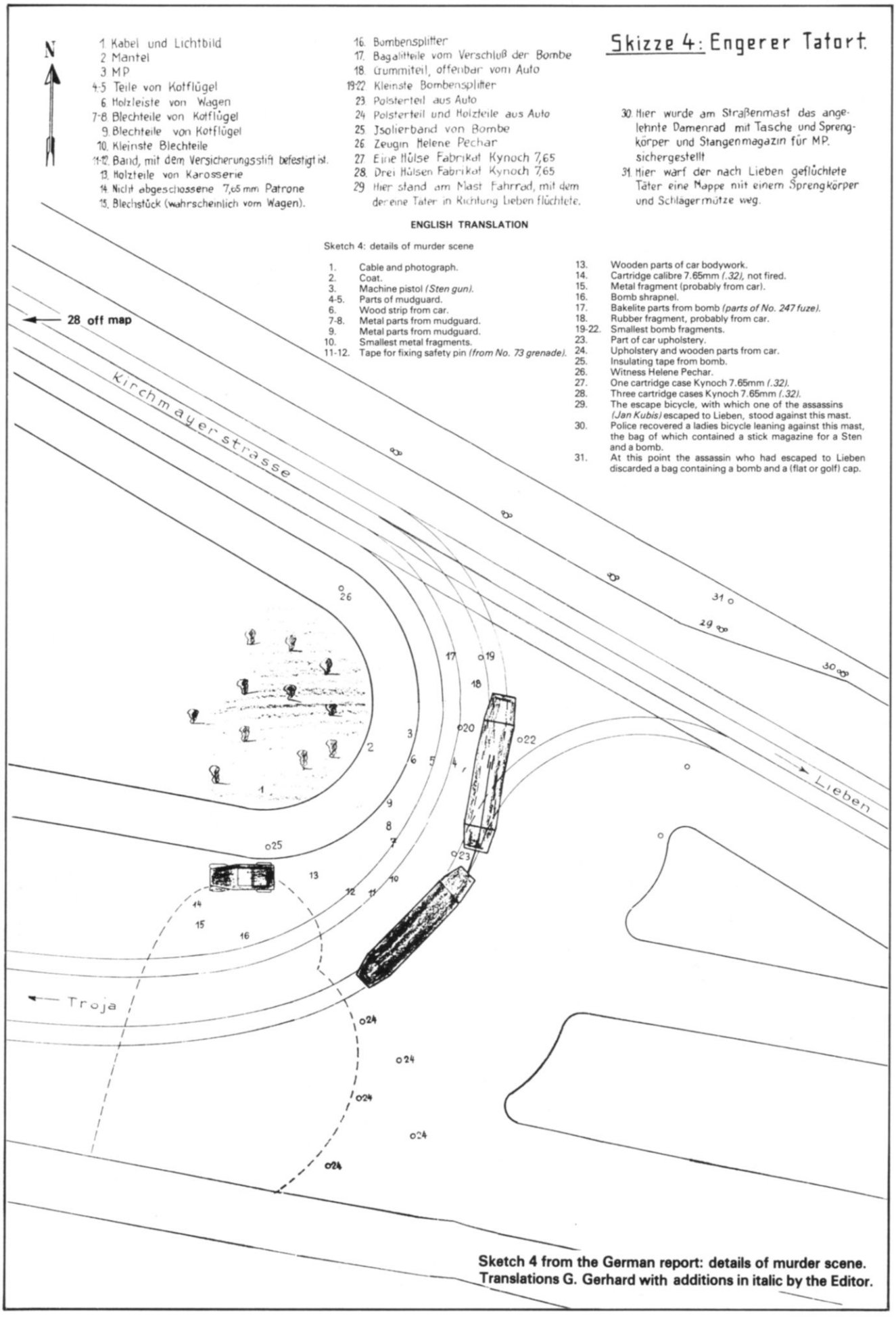
Josef Gabcik, impotently aiming the silent Sten gun at the Mercedes as it passed him, was rooted to the spot. Some frustrating, mechanical malfunction had completely negated all the planning of the past months. Transfixed to the spot, his finger pulling the trigger for all he was worth, it was only the explosion of Jan's grenade that freed him for action. Throwing down the useless gun he prepared to make his escape. Heydrich and Klein emerging from the shattered car barred the way downhill and passengers emerging from the tram blocked the other side of the road. There was only one way to go and that was back up the road, the way the Mercedes had come.

Abandoning his bicycle, he turned about and ran around the corner. Although Heydrich had his pistol unholstered, the German was staggering holding his back and it was Klein who gave chase. Unable to catch the first Czech who had escaped on the bicycle, the German driver had immediately turned his attention to Josef. Pounding after Josef pistol in hand, a wild-west-style shooting match ensued as each exchanged shot for shot. Realising he was bound to be hit if he

Above: Heydrich's view as the car descended Kirchmayerstrasse immediately before turning right into Klein Holeschowitzerstrasse. The escape routes of Jan Kubis on the bicycle (to the left) and Josef Gabcik (back up the hill) were added by the investigators. *Below:* The view of the junction in 1977 looking south-east.



Above: Another official German 'scene of crime' photograph with the route of the Mercedes added. Also indicated is the spot where the coat (Mantel) and the jammed Sten (M-Pi) discarded by Gabcik were found. *Below:* After the war the street names reverted to the Czech language. In 1977, cars descend the Rude armady before turning into V Holesovickach.

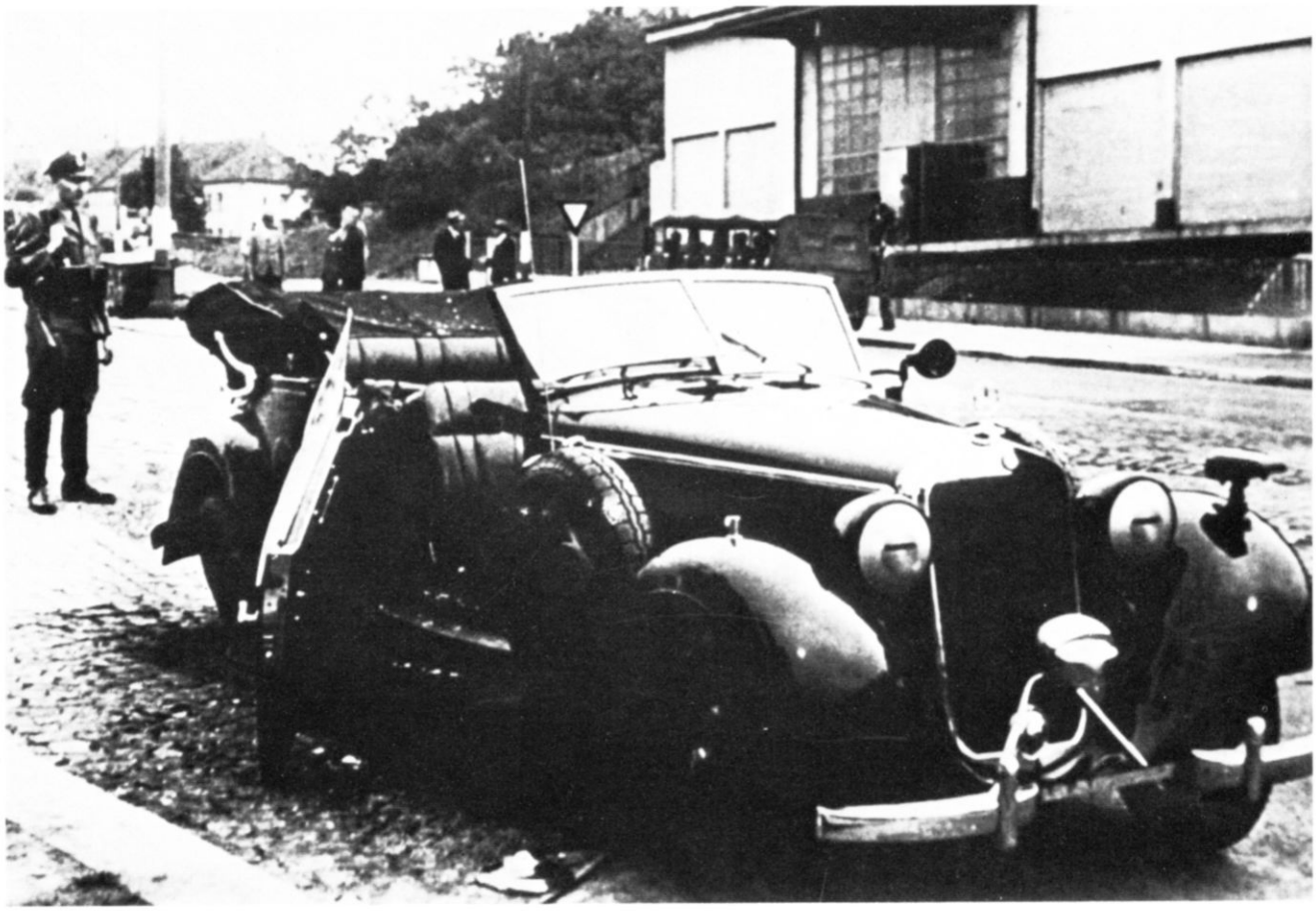

N
1. Kabel und Lichtbild
2. Mantel
3. MP
4-5. Teile von Kotflügel
6. Holzleiste von Wagen
7-8. Blechteile von Kotflügel
9. Blechteile von Kotflügel
10. Kleinste Blechteile
11-12. Band, mit dem Versicherungsstift befestigt ist.
13. Holzteile von Karosserie
14. Nicht abgeschossene 7,65 mm Patrone
15. Blechstück (wahrscheinlich vom Wagen).
16. Bombensplitter
17. Bagalitteile vom Verschluß der Bombe
18. Gummiteil, offenbar vom Auto
19-22. Kleinste Bombensplitter
23. Polsterteil aus Auto
24. Polsterteil und Holzteile aus Auto
25. Isolierband von Bombe
26. Zeugin Helene Pechar
27. Eine Hülse Fabrikat Kynoch 7,65
28. Drei Hülsen Fabrikat Kynoch 7,65
29. Hier stand am Mast Fahrrad, mit dem der eine Täter in Richtung Lieben flüchtete.
30. Hier wurde am Straßenmast das angelehnte Damenrad mit Tasche und Sprengkörper und Stangenmagazin für MP. sichergestellt
31. Hier warf der nach Lieben geflüchtete Täter eine Mappe mit einem Sprengkörper und Schlägermütze weg.
Skizze 4: Engerer Tatort
28 off map
Kirchmayerstrasse
Lieben
Troja

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Sketch 4: details of murder scene

1. Cable and photograph.
2. Coat.
3. Machine pistol *(Sten gun).*
4-5. Parts of mudguard.
6. Wood strip from car.
7-8. Metal parts from mudguard.
9. Metal parts from mudguard.
10. Smallest metal fragments.
11-12. Tape for fixing safety pin *(from No. 73 grenade).*
13. Wooden parts of car bodywork.
14. Cartridge calibre 7.65mm *(.32),* not fired.
15. Metal fragment (probably from car).
16. Bomb shrapnel.
17. Bakelite parts from bomb *(parts of No. 247 fuze).*
18. Rubber fragment, probably from car.
19-22. Smallest bomb fragments.
23. Part of car upholstery.
24. Upholstery and wooden parts from car.
25. Insulating tape from bomb.
26. Witness Helene Pechar.
27. One cartridge case Kynoch 7.65mm *(.32).*
28. Three cartridge cases Kynoch 7.65mm *(.32).*
29. The escape bicycle, with which one of the assassins *(Jan Kubis)* escaped to Lieben, stood against this mast.
30. Police recovered a ladies bicycle leaning against this mast, the bag of which contained a stick magazine for a Sten and a bomb.
31. At this point the assassin who had escaped to Lieben discarded a bag containing a bomb and a (flat or golf) cap.

Sketch 4 from the German report: details of murder scene. Translations G. Gerhard with additions in italic by the Editor.



Above: Heydrich's dark-green Mercedes Type 320. Mercedes-Benz were unable to trace its provenance but told us the model was manufactured from 1937-42 and had either a 3.4 or 6-litre engine. No doubt the Obergruppenfuehrer could afford the latter! *Below:* Just an innocent-looking street today in northern Prague — the building in the background is another 'research centre'.

ran straight up the road, when Josef reached the first turning on the left (then called Kolingarten by the Germans, and Na Kolinske by the Czechs but now fittingly renamed Gabcikova) he sped round the corner. He saw a small, suburban street lined with houses with front gardens which conveniently led downhill. Reaching the first crossroads, he decided to continue straight on as a turn to the left would only bring him back to the scene of the attack. Josef must have realised that by now the Germans and local police would be stirring into action; road blocks would be set up and unless he could shake off Klein, his ammunition would soon be exhausted.

A few yards further on another road, Pomezni, crossed from left to right. On the corner stood a butcher's shop. A local coalman, Jan Zavazal, was watching and later described what happened:

'Here, at this crossroads the young chap stopped; he probably didn't know where he was any more. Then suddenly he saw the butcher's shop. I must tell you about this butcher's shop. It was a little place and you went into it down some steps. The butcher was called Brauner: he had a relation who worked for the Gestapo. And this young chap, all out of breath, saw the shop and darted in. How could he have known the butcher was a fascist?

'Brauner came out of the shop and looked round and at this moment up comes Heydrich's chauffeur and a carter with him. They say the chauffeur had seen him in the street and forced him at pistol-point to run after the young chap along with him. Brauner pointed to the shop, to tell them he was inside.

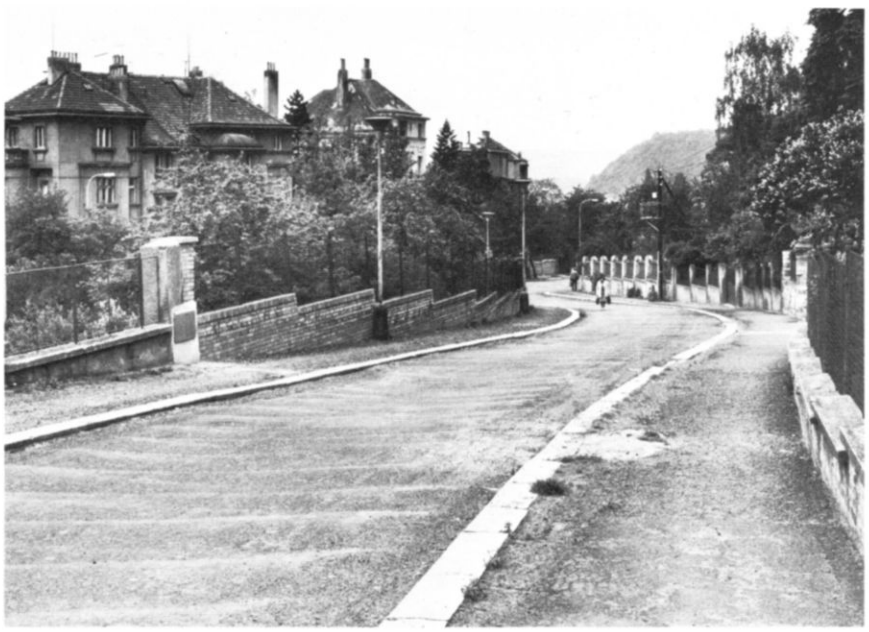
'And now it all began again. The chauffeur sheltered behind a little post in the garden and blazed away like mad. But the man hidden in the shop opened fire too and he fired better than Heydrich's chauffeur because the next moment the chauffeur fell, holding his leg. He had a bullet in his thigh. The young chap came out of the shop and started running again with the carter and Brauner the butcher after him — the chauffeur had given Brauner his revolver, but he didn't know how to use it.

'And the boy ran along this street towards me: I made myself small. A young chap, good-looking, his hair dishevelled: he went right by me and vanished between the houses'.

Having wounded Klein it was easy for Josef to out-distance the half-hearted chase by the butcher who gave up as soon as he was out of the sight of the German. However by continuing down Na Zapalci (the lower part of the road now renamed Valcikova after the third member of the team who had already made good his escape) Josef re-entered Klein Holeschowitzerstrasse. There Mrs. Milada Matulova, sunbathing in her garden, was alerted by the noise:

The beginning of Gabcikova from where Valcik first signalled the approach of the Mercedes down the hill and where Gabcik later ran to escape Heydrich's driver.

Today Gabcikova is a quiet, peaceful street. However its post-war name helps to remind one of the day when a young man frantically ran down it seeking a way to escape from his pursuer.



30: Fleischerladen, in den der MPi.-Schütze flüchtete.

The 'Battle of Brauner's Butcher's Shop' where Klein was wounded in the leg — then and now.

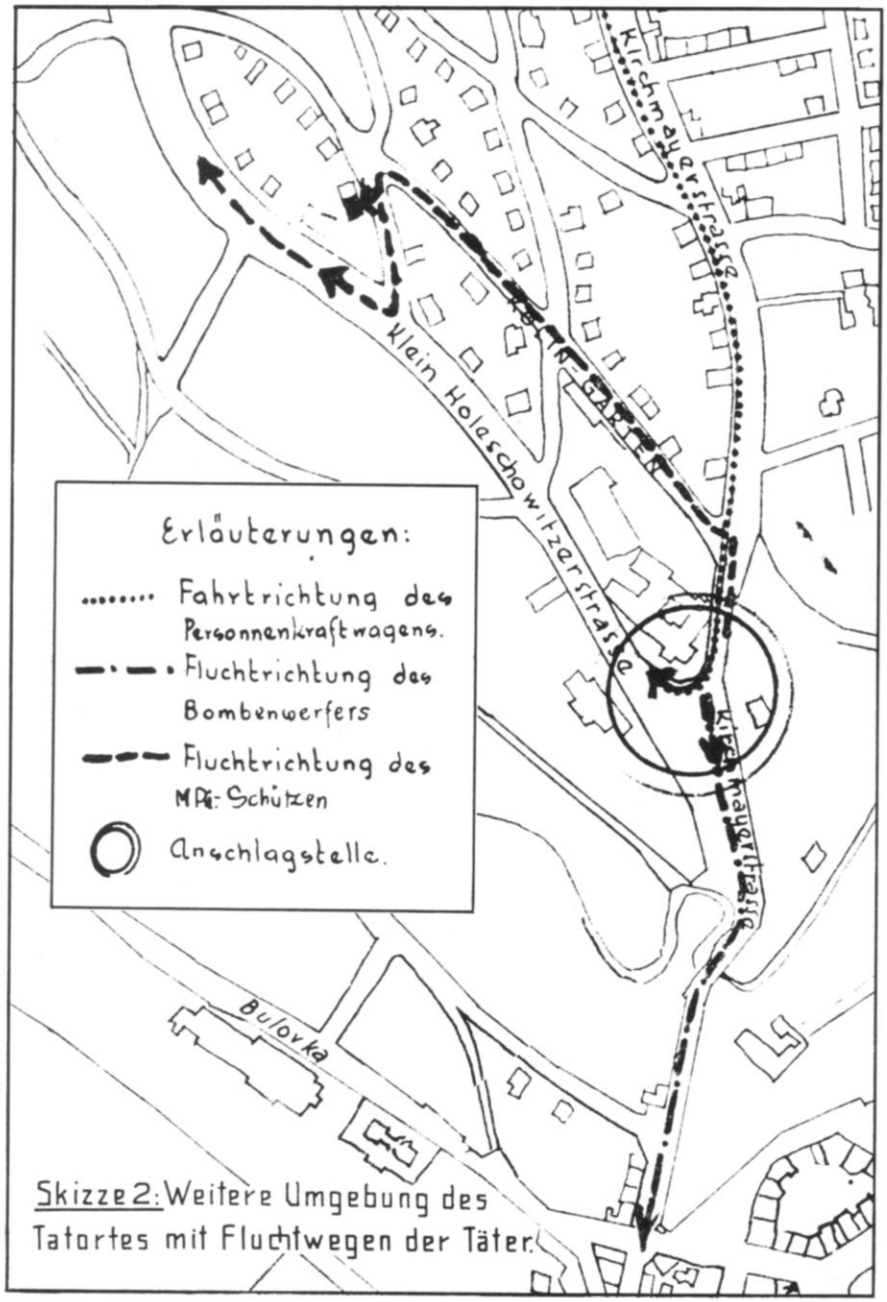
'People were coming and going along our street; up the hill we heard a few shots, but from our place you can't see as far as the corner. At that moment Gabcik came running from the side street. How best to describe him? Rather short, staring eyes, a revolver in his hand pointing in front of him, his tie flying in the wind: he was out of breath. At that time I had no idea of his name, of course, and I didn't know he had taken part in the killing, but that came to my mind at once. His strange look drew your attention. Brauner's butcher's shop was in the street he had just run along, and afterwards people said there had been a positive gun battle between him and Klein, Heydrich's chauffeur.

'For a few seconds Gabcik stopped there at the corner of our street and it seemed to me he didn't know where to go on running — he stood for two or three seconds perhaps. He looked up the hill and he must have realized that he was right by the place of the ambush — that he had turned a circle in escaping. Then he set off again, running down the hill along the streetcar tracks. I could still see him as he went round by the inn, but then he vanished among the surrounding gardens.'

Meanwhile at the scene of the accident, all was confusion. A Zetka car, driven by Karel Duben, was stopped and he was instructed by a blonde German woman, who had chanced on the scene and taken things in hand, to unload his load of sweets and take the wounded Heydrich to Bulovka Hospital. While Duben and his mate were so doing, a Tatra van approached the crossroads. Shouting and waving the blonde woman brought it to a halt and commandeered it instead of the car. As the back was loaded with crates of floor polish, Heydrich was helped in beside the driver, Frantisek Sitta. Sitta set off down the hill only to realise when he reached the bottom that the quickest way to the hospital was via the crossroads at the top. When he turned the van round Heydrich, obviously in great pain holding his bleeding back with one hand and waving his pistol in the other, sharply questioned Sitta in German. Sitta shrugged an answer but stopped when he reached the scene of the attack where the blonde was still waiting. Explaining the change of route she translated for Heydrich's benefit. At this stage, Heydrich said he would prefer to travel lying down and he was helped out by a policeman and placed flat on his stomach on top of the smelly crates in the back of the van.

At Bulovka Hospital, the duty doctor in the surgery department was Vladimir Snajdr:

'Heydrich was alone in the room, stripped to the waist, sitting on the table where we carry out the first examination. I greeted him in Czech; he raised his hand but did not



Sketch 2 from the investigation showing what the Germans knew at the time — the escape routes of Jan and Josef.

Above left: **View looking west along Klein Holeschowitzerstrasse down which Heydrich was first driven to Bulovka Hospital before the van driver, Frantisek Sitta, realised he was going the wrong way (refer to map above).** *Above right:* **Careful comparison with the 1977 photograph shows how the curve was realigned after the war to make it safer.**

answer. I took forceps and a few swabs and tried to see whether the wound was deep. He did not stir, he did not flinch, although it must have hurt him. Meanwhile a nurse had telephoned Professor Dick, a German, asking him to come to the theatre.

'At first sight the wound did not seem dangerous — unfortunately. Sometimes, you know, doctors find themselves in a complex situation. Take this case, for example. Since I was a decent Czech I was delighted that Heydrich should be in a bad way. All it needed was for him to have been wounded a few inches lower down, in the kidneys, or for the spinal column to have been affected and everything would have been straight-forward. But since I was also a doctor my duty was to cure, not kill. But should you cure fascists? He was a murderer and killing a tyrant is an act that benefits mankind as a whole. Before I could make up my mind Professor Dick hurried in. He was a German doctor who the Nazis had appointed to our hospital.

' "What's the matter?" he asked. It was only at that moment that he caught sight of Heydrich. He cried "Heil!" clicked his heels and began to examine him. He tried to see whether the kidney was touched: no, all seemed well for Heydrich. And the same applied to his spinal column. Then he was put into a wheel-chair and taken off to the X-ray room. Heydrich tried to behave courageously and he walked from the chair to the X-ray machine by himself.

'The X-ray showed something in the wound, perhaps a bomb splinter. Or a piece of coachwork. In short, there was something there inside. Dr. Dick thought the splinter was in the chest wall and that it could be extracted by a simple local operation. We had a theatre in the basement for operations of that kind. Dick tried it, but without success. The patient's state called for a full-scale surgical operation: one rib was broken, the thoracic cage was open, a bomb splinter was in the spleen and the diaphragm was pierced.

"Herr Protektor" said Dick to Heydrich, "we must operate."

Heydrich refused. He wanted a surgeon to be brought from Berlin.

"But your condition requires an immediate operation," said Dick. They were speaking German, of course.

'Heydrich thought it over and in the end he agreed that Professor Hollbaum, of the German surgical clinic in Prague, should be called in. He was taken to the aseptic theatre: I was not there; I had to stay in the room where the instruments were sterilized. Dr. Dick was the only one who helped Professor Hollbaum during the operation. The wound was about three inches deep and it contained a good deal of dirt and little splinters. Karl Hermann Frank, Hacha, the President of the Protectorate, and members of the government waited in the corridor outside the theatre.

'After the operation Heydrich was taken to Dr. Dick's office on the second storey. The Germans had emptied the whole floor, turning the patients out or sending them home; and they transformed the dining room into an SS barracks. They set up machine-guns on the roof and SS, armed to the teeth, paced about the entrance below.

'No Czech doctor and no Czech member of the staff was allowed on the floor where Heydrich was. I tried to go up there to ask how he was doing. I said I was on duty and that I was looking for Dr. Puhala but they told me openly that I had no business there.

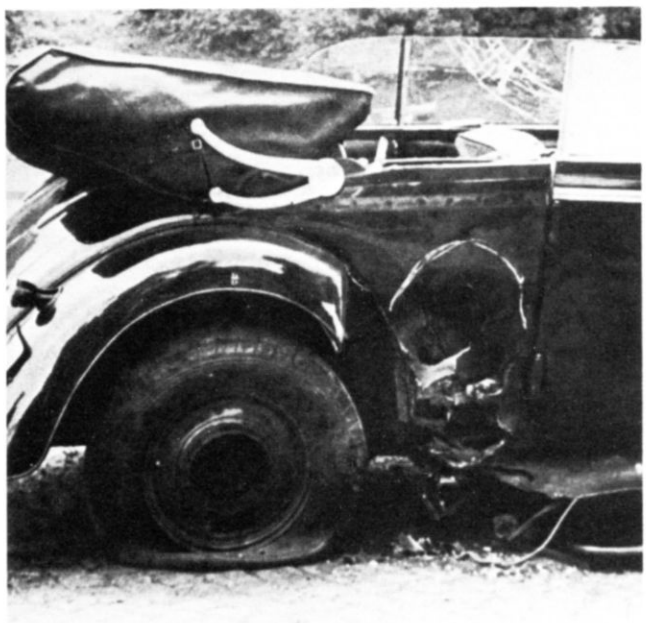
'So I have no exact information on Heydrich's condition after the operation. Perhaps they had to remove his spleen. I did not see him again. But Dr. Dick said that he was coming along very well. His death surprised us all. Up to the last moment of his life, not one of the Czech doctors working at the Bulovka knew the truth.

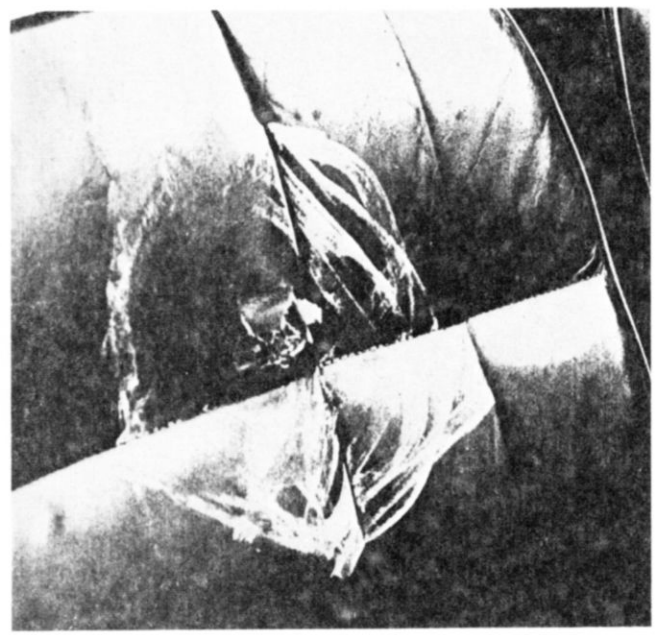
'During the last days of Heydrich's life we lived in a kind of dream. Every day visitors appeared, wearing black uniforms, the cream of the SS with bunches of flowers; his own doctor flew in from Berlin; Frau Heydrich came to see him. Up until June 4, the day of his death.

'Septicaemia, they said. Blood transfusions could do nothing. Professor Hamperl, head of the German Institute of Pathology, and Professor Weyrich, head of the German Institute of Forensic Medicine, drew up a joint report on their medical conclusions. Among other things, it reported that death occurred as a consequence of lesions in the vital parenchymatous organs caused by bacteria and possibly by poisons carried into them by the bomb splinters and deposited chiefly in the pleura, the diaphragm and the tissues in the neighbourhood of the spleen, there agglomerating and multiplying.'

Following his death on June 4 eight days after the attack, Heydrich's body lay in state in the forecourt of Hradcany castle before being transferred to Berlin. There on June 8, amid much pomp and demonstration of mourning, he was buried in the Invaliden Cemetery.

The entrance to Bulovka Hospital where Heydrich died on June 4, 1942 — all photography forbidden beyond this point.





Left: **The damage to the nearside of the Mercedes (CTK) and** *right* **the splinter hole in the back of Heydrich's seat.**

Left: Flanked by an SS guard of honour, Heydrich's body lies in state on the forecourt of Hradcany Castle (CTK). *Above:* The unchanged view thirty-five years later — including the same Petrin tower on the skyline.

Left: Paradoxically photographed passing the crucifix on the ancient Karluv most (Charles bridge), the coffin is carried by the SS to the railway station (Camera Press). *Above:* Lovers admire the river Vltava (originally the Moldau). The castle lies in the background.

June 8, 1942, Wilhelmstrasse, Berlin. Heydrich is borne on a gun carriage to his final resting place in the Invaliden Cemetery. The East German Press Agency have informed us that his grave can no longer be identified (Associated Press).

ESCAPE TO MARTYRDOM

Above left: **The Novak's house on the appropriately-renamed Novakovych street in Liben (just over a mile from the scene of the attack) where Jan sought refuge.** *Above:* **The memorial plaque which records that the family lost their lives as a result in Mauthausen concentration camp.**

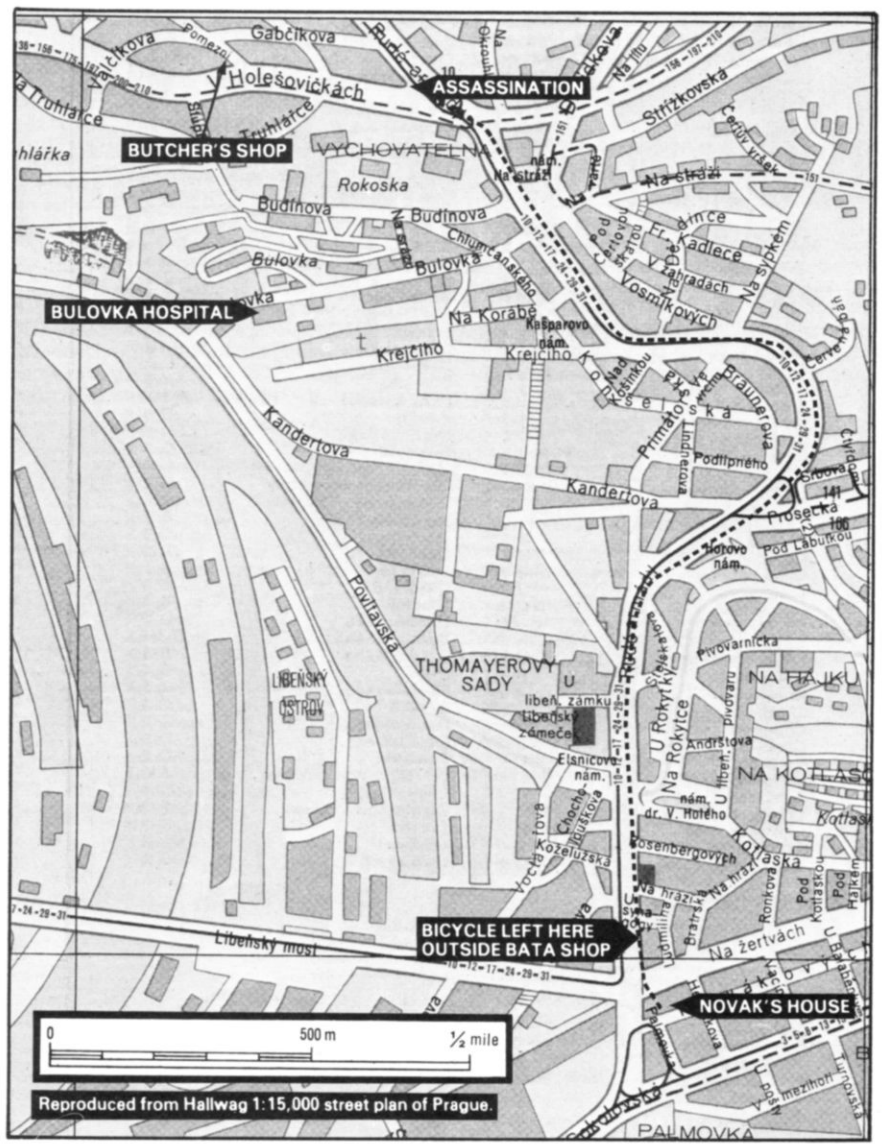
When Jan Kubis descended the hill on his bicycle, he found refuge in the house of the Novak family. Mrs. Novak was at home when Jan, wounded in the face, chest and hand from splinters from the grenade, knocked at the door. He had left the bicycle, a blazon piece of evidence with bloodstains on the handlebars, propped outside the nearby Bata shoe shop. Mrs. Novak sent her fourteen-year-old daughter, Jindriska, to fetch it but, in doing so, several passers-by spotted her and asked her if she had been in an accident. (Later this was to lead the Gestapo to trace and arrest the Novak family.)

Josef Gabcik reached the house of another resistance family, Mr. and Mrs. Fafek; Adolf Opalka had reached the flat of Mrs. Tereza Kasperova and Josef Valcik the house of Frantisek Sulek.

Meanwhile Nazi Secretary of State Karl Frank had telephoned Hitler at 12.15 p.m. informing him of the attack. Hitler flew into a rage, the more so when he learned that Heydrich had been travelling without an armed escort. Hitler immediately appointed Frank to take over the duties of Reichsprotektor, to begin an immediate search for the criminals responsible and to offer a reward of one million marks for their capture or for information leading to their arrest. He also ordered that any persons found helping the attackers were to be shot together with their whole families and, additionally, ten-thousand Czechs were to be taken as hostage and executed.

Immediately the manhunt for the attackers swung into top gear and Prague became the focus of attention throughout German-occupied Europe. Frank issued his first proclamation to the populace by radio at 4.30 p.m. and announced that a curfew would be in operation from 9.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m. that night during which time all cinemas, restaurants, theatres and other places of entertainment were to close and all traffic was to leave the streets. The ordinance was broadcast by both German and Czech radio with increasing frequency during the afternoon and evening.

At 8.00 p.m. Frank informed Himmler of the measures already taken and, at 9.32 p.m., a State of Seige was proclaimed throughout the whole country. As darkness fell, 4,500 men of the Gestapo, SS, NSKK and Czech national police together with three German Army battalions began a huge dragnet operation throughout the city which was



The escape route taken by Jan on his bicycle outlined on a modern map of Prague.

completely sealed off with sentries in every street. In all, 541 people were arrested and 111 taken into custody for further questioning. Although the sweep failed to unearth any of the attackers, Mrs. Tereza Kasperova had a nasty moment when her house was searched. There was just time for Opalka to secrete himself in a small broom cupboard before the SS burst in but, fortunately, they did not move aside the sofa which stood in front of the hiding place.

The following day Frank flew to confer with Hitler in Berlin. While the Gestapo had failed to make any positive arrests during the night's city-wide search, they were not totally without leads. During the apprehension of a resistance worker some time before, a briefcase had been found containing names and photographs of Czech agents which had been prepared for false identity papers. On May 28, the Germans distributed posters showing one of these photographs of Josef Gabcik (although they incorrectly named him as Miroslav Valcik) offering a reward of 100,000 Czech crowns for his arrest. Purely by chance, the Gestapo had stumbled on more than they realised.

At the same time all the witnesses in the tramcars, surrounding houses and passers-by were taken in for detailed questioning. The articles left at the scene had already been minutely examined and were put on display in the Bata shoe shop (not the same one where Jan left his bike) at No. 6 Wenceslas Square in central Prague from 9.00 a.m. on May 28. A full description of the objects found was also given on striking red and black posters:

'One of the criminals left behind him a pale beige waterproof-silk coat with light buttons. Each man had a dark-brown briefcase. These were found at the place of the outrage. One of the briefcases contained a dirty beige velour beret with the label of Bila Labut (White Swan) stores. The criminal who fled on foot left a woman's bicycle near the spot: it has the mark Moto-Velo J. Krcmar, Teplice, and the manufacturer's number 40,363. The wheels have black rims with ⅜in red stripes; the frame and the forks are ivory and red; the

Now re-named OBUV, this is the old Bata shoe shop outside which Jan left his bicycle (see map page 19).

The poster in German and Czech.

Attentat

auf den

Stellvertretenden Reichsprotektor.

10 Millionen Kronen Belohnung

für zweckdienliche Angaben, die zur Ergreifung der Täter führen.

Am 27. Mai 1942 gegen 10.30 Uhr wurde auf den Stellvertretenden Reichsprotektor, SS-Obergruppenführer Heydrich, ein Attentat verübt. Der Stellvertretende Reichsprotektor kam mit seinem Kraftwagen aus der Richtung Jungfern-Brücken durch die Kirchmayerstraße in Stadtteil Prag-Liboc und war im Begriff, in die Klein-Holeschowitzerstraße einzubiegen, um in die Stadt zu fahren. Dabei stellte sich dem Wagen ein Mann entgegen, der versuchte, mit einer Maschinenpistole Schüsse auf die Insassen des Wagens abzugeben. Im gleichen Augenblick warf ein zweiter Mann einen Sprengkörper gegen den Wagen, der beim Aufschlag explodierte. Nach dem Anschlag flüchtete der eine Täter durch die Kirchmayerstraße und den Kolongarten in die Zandstätte in die Fleischerei Franz Brunner, Hausnummer 22. Von hier aus setzte er nach Abgabe einiger Schüsse seine Flucht durch die Zandstätte zur Klein-Holeschowitzerstraße, vermutlich in Stadtrichtung, fort. Der zweite Täter flüchtete auf einem bereitstehenden Fahrrad durch die Kirchmayerstraße in Richtung des Stadtteils Alt-Liboc.

Dieser Täter war ein mittelgroßer, schlanker Mann, der einen dunklen bis schwarzen Anzug und einen schwarzen Hut trug.

Der andere Täter, der durch die Kirchmayerstraße und den Kolongarten flüchtete, wird wie folgt beschrieben:

1.60—1.62 groß, breitschultrige, kräftige Figur, volles, rundes, sommergebräuntes Gesicht, breiter Mund mit aufgeworfenen Lippen, dunkles, nach hinten gekämmtes Haar; etwa 30—35 Jahre alt.

Der Mann war bekleidet mit einem dunklen bis dunkelbraunen Anzug, mit hellen Streifen, und braunen Halbschuhen. Eine Kopfbedeckung trug er bei der Flucht nicht.

Einer der Täter hat am Tatort einen hellbeigen Sommermantel aus Seidenstoff mit hellen Knöpfen zurückgelassen. Jeder der Täter hatte je eine dunkelbraune Aktentasche bei sich, die am Tatort vorgefunden wurden. In einer der Taschen befand sich eine angerauchte beigefarbige Baskenmütze aus Kunstseide, die ein großes rotes Schutzleder Firmenzeichen des Warenhauses „Wohlker Bakowski" trägt. Der Täter, der am Tatort flüchtete, hat in der Hitze des Gefechtes ein Damenfahrrad Marke „Moto-Velo J. Krčmar, Teplitz", Fabriksnummer 40 363 zurückgelassen. Das Damenrad hat schwarze Felgen mit 4 mm breiten roten Streifen, rot-elfenbein verzierter Gabel und Rahmen, rotes, schwarzverschnürtes Handgriffe, rotbemaltes, gutverkabeltes Sattel mit Straußfedern, bronze Werkzeugkasten, schwarzer Kettenschutz und stark beschädigten, dunkel bis hell gefärbten Kleiderschutz. Am Rad befindet sich eine verstellbare Fahrradpumpe mit Fußhebel und 35 cm langem Luftschlauch. An diesem Rad hing die eine der am Tatort gefundenen Aktentaschen.

Die Täter müssen längere Zeit, vielleicht sogar Stunden, am Tatort auf den Stellv. Reichsprotektor gewartet haben.

Unter Hinweis auf die **ausgesetzte Belohnung von 10 Millionen Kronen**, die für Angaben aus der Bevölkerung, die zur Ergreifung der Täter führen, ausgesetzt ist und **voll zur Auszahlung gelangt**, wird gefragt:

1. Wer kann Angaben über die Täter machen?
2. Wer hat die Täter am Tatort beobachtet?
3. Wem gehören die näher beschriebenen Gegenstände, insbesondere wem fehlt das beschriebene Bameurad, der Mantel, die Mütze und die Aktentaschen?

Die näherbeschriebenen Gegenstände werden ab heute um 9 Uhr in einem Schaufenster der Schuhfirma Bata, Prag II, am Wenzelsplatz No. 6 ausgestellt.

Wer die gewünschten Auskünfte geben könnte, sie aber nicht von selbst der Polizei gegenüber macht, wird entsprechend der bekanntgegebenen Verordnung des Reichsprotektors in Böhmen und Mähren über die Verhängung des Standrechtes Ausnahmezustandes vom 27. Mai 1942 mit seiner Familie erschossen. Allen Personen wird augenblicklich, daß ihm Angaben auf Wunsch streng vertraulich behandelt werden. Durchbrechen haben alle Hausbesitzer, Wohnungsinhaber und Inhaber von Betrieben usw. ab 28. V. 1942 die Pflicht, polizeilichen Stellen sofort unaufgefordert Personen zu gestatten, Verstecken der unerlaubten Gegenstände unter Hinweis auf diese Bekanntmachung zur Anzeige zu bringen. Vorsatz gegen diese Anordnung wird mit dem Tode bestraft.

Mitteilungen nimmt die Gebietsverkaufsstelle, Staatspolizeileitstelle Prag, Prag II, Bredauergasse Nr. 20, Telefonnummer 30.041, sowie jede andere deutsche und Protektorats-Polizeidienststelle entgegen, nebenstehend eine telefonische entgegen.

Prag, den 28. Mai 1942.

Der Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer
beim Reichsprotektor in Böhmen und Mähren
gez. K. H. Frank.

Atentát

na

Zastupujícího říšského protektora.

10 miliónů korun odměny

za předmětné údaje, které povedou k dopadení pachatelů

Dne 27. května 1942 asi v 10.30 hod. byl spáchán útok na Zastupujícího říšského protektora SS-Obergruppenführera Heydricha. Zastupující říšský protektor přijel [illegible] Jungfern-Brücken ulicí Kirchmayerovou [illegible] Prahy-Libně a právě chtěl zahnout do ulice V Holešovičkách, aby jel dále do města, když [illegible] postavil vozu v cestě muž, jenž se pokoušel vystřelit z automatické pistole na osoby [illegible] druhý muž proti vozu třaskavinu, která při nárazu vybuchla. Po útoku[illegible] z ulice Na Kolkárně do ulice Na Zápolí do [illegible] Brunner, číslo domu 22. Odtud [illegible] byl vypálil několik výstřelů, pokračoval v útěku ulicí Na Zápolí k ulici V Holešovičkách [illegible] Druhý pachatel uprchl na připraveném [illegible] Kirchmayerova [illegible] k [illegible]

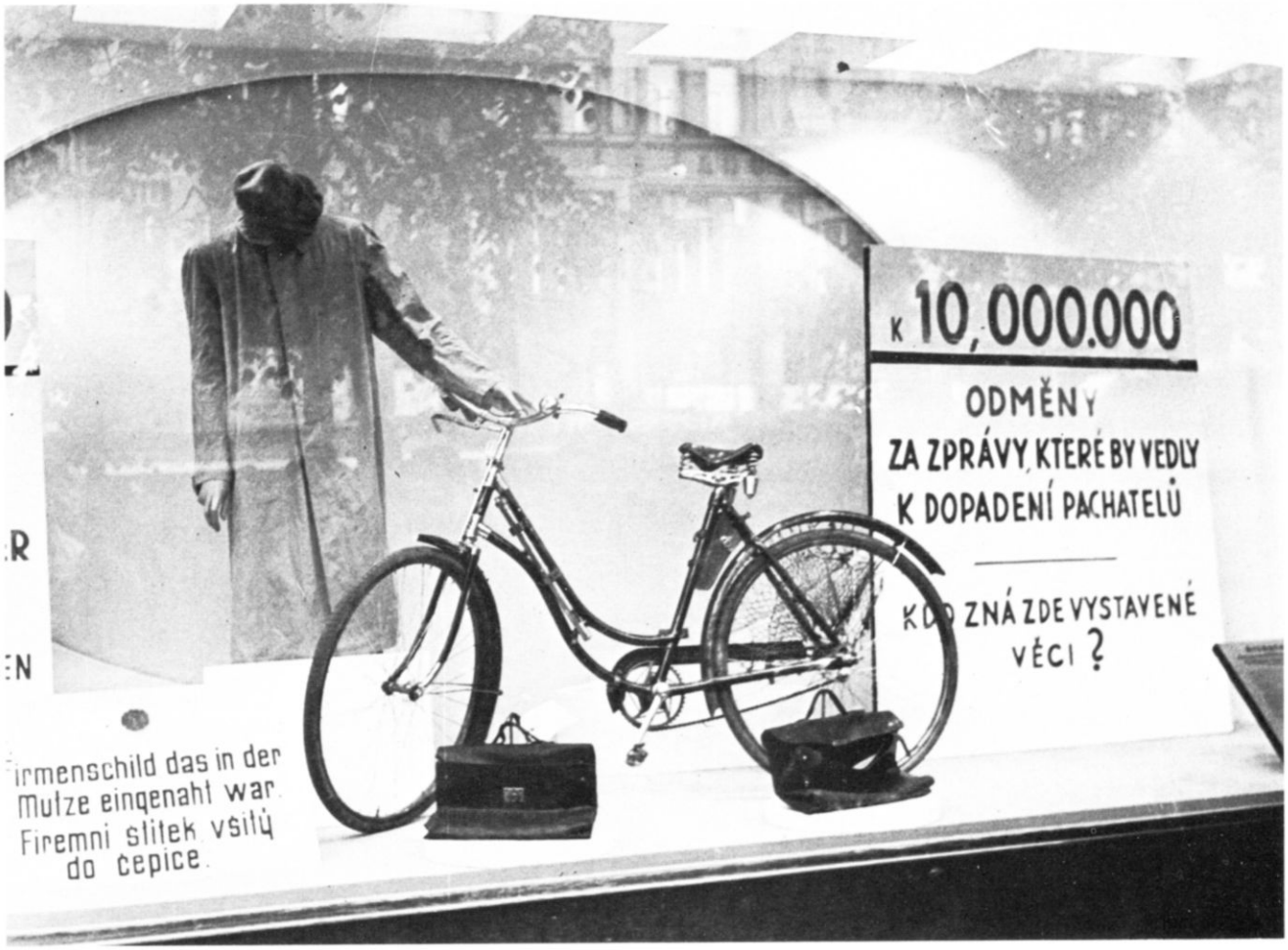
Tento pachatel byl muž středně velikosti, štíhlý, měl na sobě tmavý oděv šedý asi 1.60 až 1.62 dlouhý a dobrý hlasbouk.

Druhý pachatel, ten, který opustil Kirchmeyerovu třídou a ulicí Na Kolkárně, je popisován takto:

Vysoký 160—162, široký v ramenou, silná postava, plný, okrouhlý, zdravou opálenou pletí [illegible] ústa a okrouhlými rty, tmavě dozadu učesané vlasy; stáří asi 30—35 let.

Tento muž měl na sobě tmavý oděv [illegible] šedý se světlými proužky a hnědé střevíce. Pokrývku hlavy při útěku neměl.

Jeden z pachatelů zanechal na místě činu světlý [illegible] z hedvábného hedvábí se světlými knoflíky. Každý z pachatelů měl tmavě hnědou aktovku, které byly nalezeny na místě činu. V jedné z hnědých aktovek byla [illegible] hnědavé barvy z umělého hedvábí, na níž je velká, okrouhlá, umělohedvábí značka firmy obchodního domu „Wohlker Bakowski" v Praze, Tyršově [illegible] Tento [illegible] vykazující asi dvacet různé barvy [illegible] v [illegible] Strojírna dovozem [illegible] Teplitz", továrenské číslo 40.363. Tento dámský [illegible] má dvacet různé barvy [illegible] [illegible] červené dřevové [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

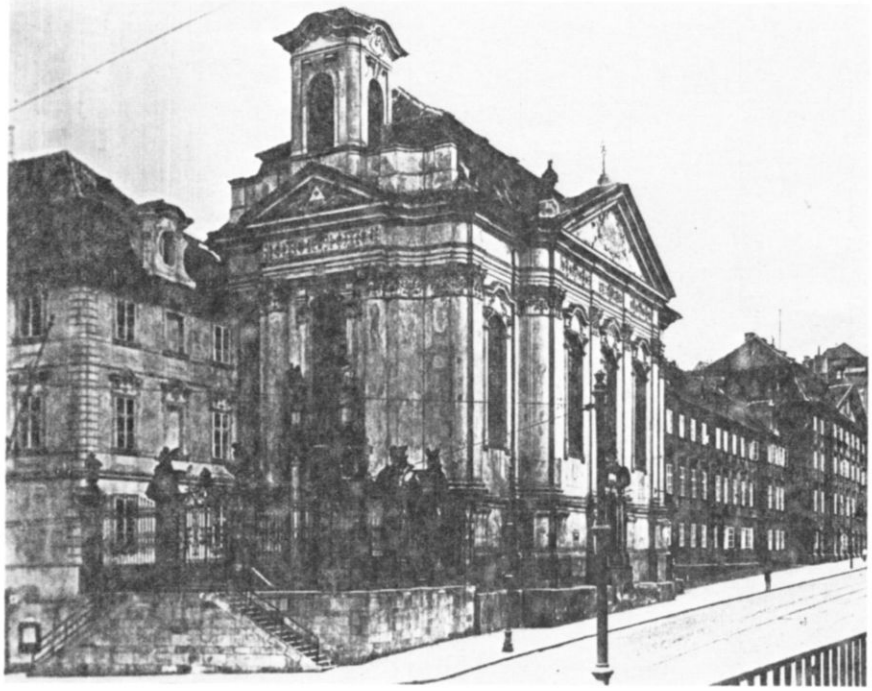


handlebars red; the handgrips black; the saddle (in good condition) red-brown; the tool bag brown; the chainguard black. The bicycle has nickelplated pump with a foot rest; the tube is 10in long. One of the briefcases found at the place of the crime was hung on the handlebars of this bicycle.' *(This was Josef's with the unprimed grenade although no mention was made of this by the Germans or of the live grenade found in the other briefcase. — Ed)*

However, in spite of an efficient start to their investigation, the Gestapo failed to uncover the whereabouts of the four assailants. They were all still in the city being constantly moved from house to house but increasing Gestapo pressure made it essential to find a completely safe place where they could hide, if necessary, for weeks until the furore died down. It was at this stage that the underground leader 'Uncle Hajsky' approached the Dean of the Orthodox Church in Prague, Jan Sonnevend, for help. The latter suggested that the crypt of St. Cyril and St. Methodus Church on Resslova Street would make an ideal sanctuary and arrangements were made with the Priest, Dr. Vladimir Petrek, to receive the fugitives. Jan Kubis arrived first on May 30 to be followed by Josef Valcik, Adolf Opalka, Jaroslav Svarc of the 'Tin' group, Josef Bublik and Jan Hruby of the 'Bioscop' team and finally Josef Gabcik who arrived on June 1. Seven men in all. As the men sheltered in the church crypt, the Germans intensified their investigations; Prague became a holocaust of arrests with daily proclamations of executions of innocent hostages as the Nazis vented their wrath on the Czechs. However, to the seven men in the crypt, not knowing at that stage that their target was on his deathbed in Bulovka hospital, it seemed that their futile action had only brought death and suffering to their own countrymen.

The display of the clues recovered at the scene of the crime in the Bata shoe shop window in central Prague (not the shop in Liben). The large notice announces a reward of ten million crowns to anyone who recognises any of the items on display which would lead to the apprehension of the criminals. The raincoat was Josef's, which he used to conceal the Sten, as was the briefcase on the right (which the Germans found hanging on the handlebars of his ladies bicycle (see photograph page 6) which contained the unfused bomb and a Sten magazine. The other briefcase, containing Jan's second primed grenade and his cap was found at point 31 on the map on page 12.

Above: **The same window of the old Bata shop on Vaclavske Namesti in 1977. Renamed OBUV, it is one of the most-frequented shops in Prague.**



THE JUDAS ISCARIOT OF WWII

Original German SD photographs. *Above:* **Dr. Vladmir Petrek, priest of St. Cyril and St. Methodus Church** *photo left.*

For a week following the attack and two weeks after the death of Heydrich, in spite of the most stringent measures against the Czech population, the Gestapo investigation was no nearer finding the culprits. Then, on June 16, Karel Curda of Adolf Opalka's 'Out Distance' group called at the Gestapo HQ in the Pecek Palace at 20 Bredovska in Prague to betray his fellow Czechs. The official report, written on June 25, 1942 by the Chief of the Prague Gestapo, SS-Standartenfuehrer Dr. Hans Geschke, describes in detail the depth of his betrayal:

'Curda stated that he recognised one of the briefcases left behind at the place of the outrage. During the interrogation, whose results agreed with those of the technical criminal investigation, it at once became apparent that we were dealing with a clue of the first importance and that Curda's statements were true. Later he admitted that he was a parachutist and that he had landed in Protectorate territory during the night of March 28-29, 1942 together with five other agents. He recognized the briefcase immediately, saying that he had seen it in the possession of another parachutist at the flat occupied by the Svatos family and he confirmed that this briefcase contained an English light machine gun with which he was familiar.

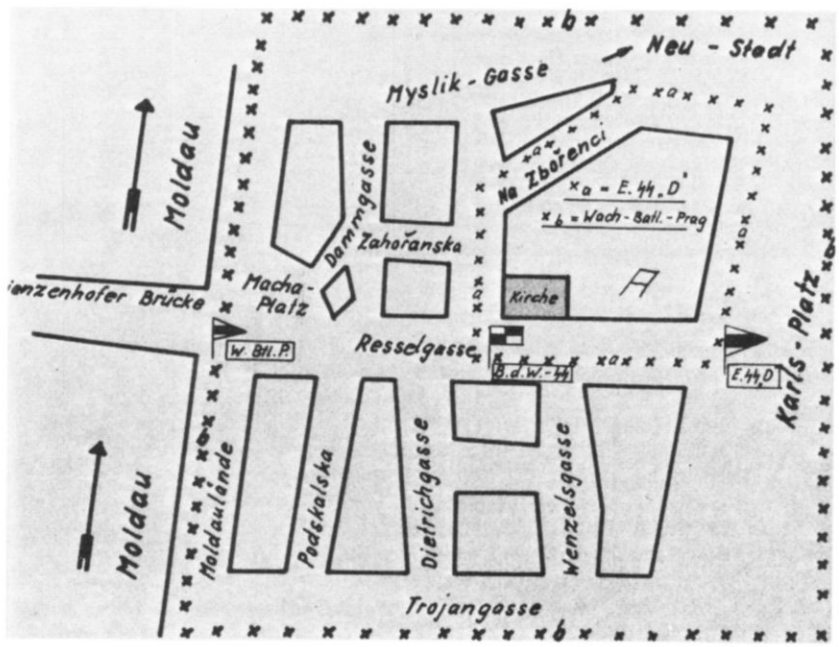
'As his description of this parachutist agreed with the description of one of the criminals, Josef Gabcik (cover-name Zdenda), formerly domiciled at Poluvsie near Zilina, was set down as a suspect. Curda did not know Gabcik's present dwelling place. The head office of the state police worked upon this clue with the utmost energy and employing all possible means it discovered a direct lead after no more than thirty-six hours of the most concentrated activity; this clue pointed to the criminals and in the subsequent five hours it led to their discovery.

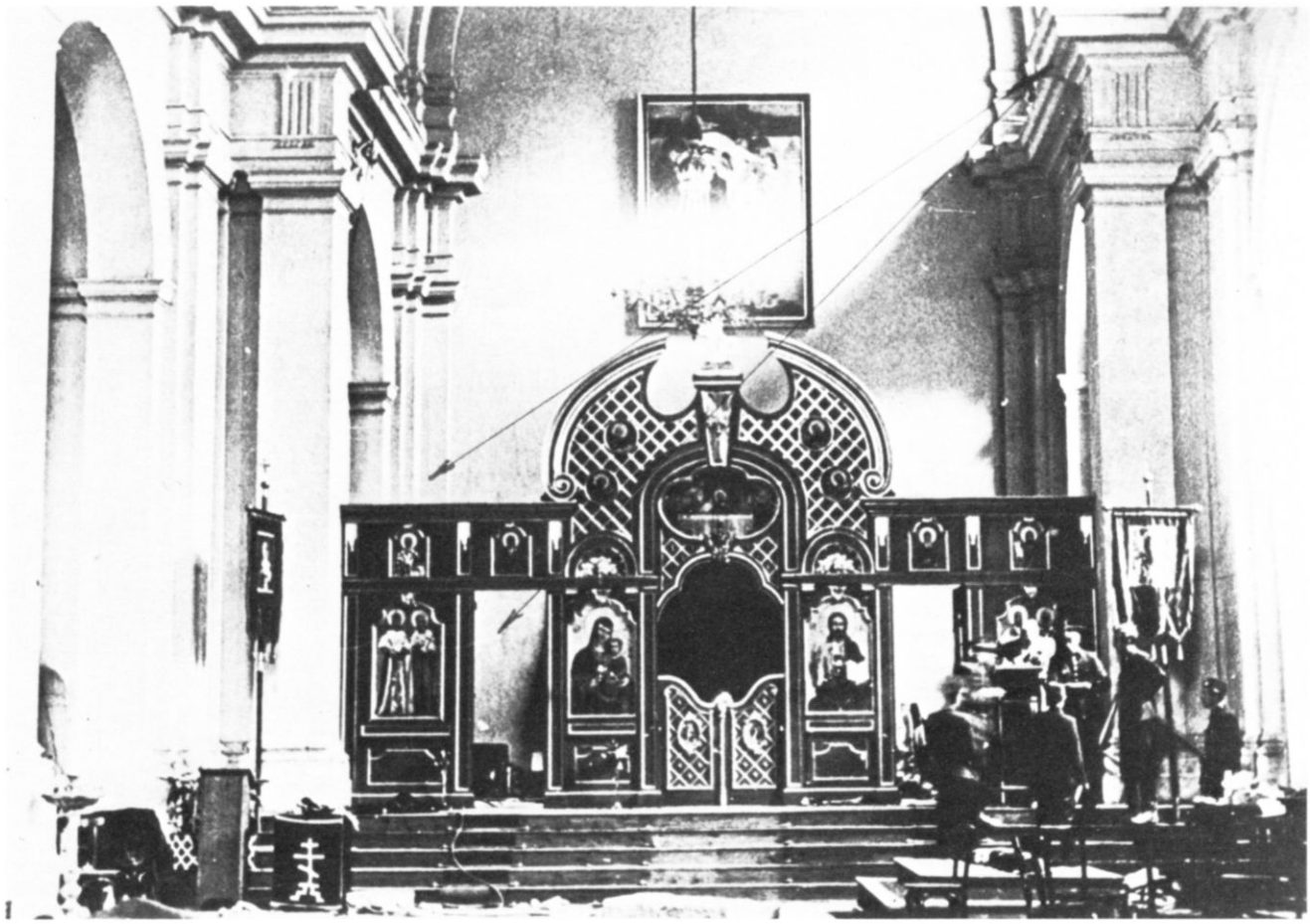
'Curda mentioned his suspicion that the second criminal might be Jan Kubis (cover-name Navratil), Gabcik's best friend; but he was unable to confirm this. The two parachutists named by Curda were unknown to us as enemy agents: their names too were unknown. The weapons of English manufacture found at the place of the attack showed that parachutists had certainly taken part in the outrage. When at last Curda, in the course of subsequent interrogations, betrayed part of the clandestine shelter network used by enemy agents and known to him, these shelters were discreetly watched according to our tactical methods, all at the same time and as rapidly as possible. This investigation finally resulted in the identification of the Svatos family, the owners of the second briefcase found at the place of the outrage, and of Madame Moravcova, the owner of the woman's bicycle.

'The bicycle had in fact been lent to Zdenda, alias Gabcik, and the Svatos family's briefcases to Ota, alias Kubis; from the criminal point of view this entirely proved these persons' complicity in the attempt on the life of SS-Obergruppenfuehrer Reinhard Heydrich.'

Curda's traitorous act led to a series of arrests throughout June 17, one of the Gestapo's first calls being at the home of the Moravec family (where Jan and Josef had first stayed when they reached Prague) which was raided at dawn. As the Gestapo prepared to take the family away, Mrs. Moravec made an excuse to visit the toilet where she swallowed poison. 'Uncle Hajsky' living in the same street was next on the list — he too committed suicide as the Gestapo smashed down his front door. The arrests continued throughout the day to be followed by the torture of those taken alive. By midnight someone had broken and the hiding place of the seven was known. SS-Gruppenfuehrer Frank was immediately informed who in turn roused SS-Brigadefuehrer Karl von Truenfeld who was instructed to mount an immediate operation to seal off the church.

At 2,00 a.m. on June 18, the first orders were issued and, by 4.15 a.m., SS troops had formed two cordons around the church (*see* map reproduced below from von Truenfeld's operational report). Ten minutes later Superintendent Pannwitz, one of the Gestapo chiefs leading the investigation, entered the church with his team and interpreter.





Above: **The interior of the church after the battle with a German annotation showing the direction of fire from the balcony.**

THE SEVEN FIGHT IT OUT

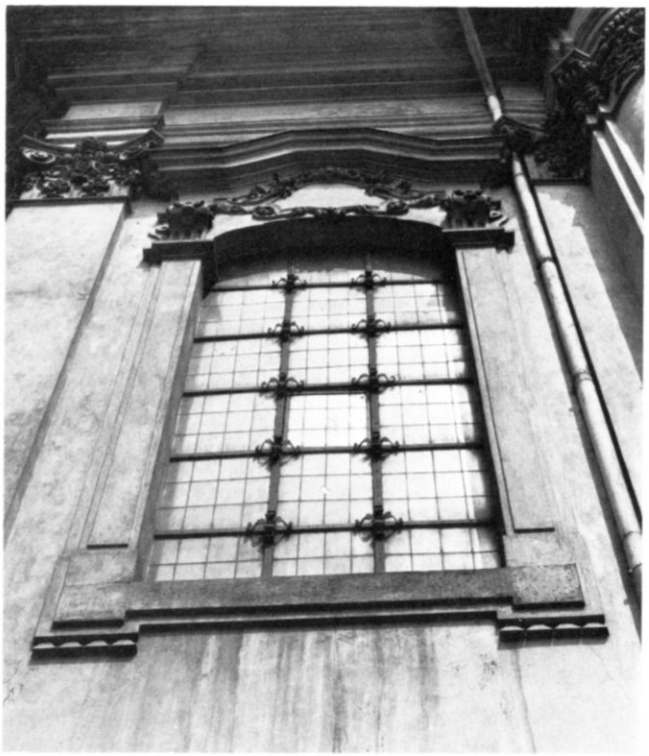
For more than fourteen days the little church on Resslova Street had been a refuge for the seven Czechs. They took it in turns to keep watch from the balcony above the rood screen which separated the altar from the congregation while the others slept in the crypt. The latter was reached through a two-foot-square hole covered by a thick flagstone set with an iron ring, normally covered by a coconut mat. A set of rungs led down to a chamber some fifty feet by twelve with a series of empty, square-shaped niches set in the walls which, in former years, had been the repository for coffins end on. On the far side, a set of stone stairs led up to the nave of the church but this opening was permanently sealed by a heavy stone slab. A small, barred opening, high up in the wall, provided ventilation from the street. As the only way to enter the crypt was one at a time down the iron rungs, the place was virtually impregnable to assault. A bucket containing lime and chlorine provided the only WC.

Because the sacristan's wife, presently on holiday could not be relied on to keep her mouth shut, it was decided on June 16 to move the seven men before she returned to new hiding places in the countryside on Friday, June 19, from where it was hoped they could eventually get back to England.

As dawn was breaking on Thursday, June 18, Lieutenant Opalka, the most senior of those present, Jan Kubis and Jaroslav Svarc were mounting guard on the balcony. Perhaps they had already been alerted by the noise of the troops arriving in the street but, nevertheless, when Superintendent Pannwitz entered the church, they were ready and waiting. As the Germans approached the altar, shots crashed out from above, one of the Gestapo men, Kahlo, immediately being wounded. Superintendent Pannwitz shouted for them to retire and it was more by luck than judgment that there were no more casualties as they crowded back to the door.

The repaired and restored east end of the church today.

On hearing the firing the SS, who had set up a machine gun in a window of the school opposite, opened up on the large church windows. The battle had begun. Detachments of storm troopers were ordered into the building but the excellent vantage point for the three defenders on the balcony routed every attack. The only way up was via a spiral staircase, impossible to ascend except in single file. During the next two hours, the three Czechs held off every attempt by the SS to storm their position, the interior of the church becoming a shambles of broken wood and stone. The crash of grenades and gunfire must have been agonising for the other four, impotent in the vault below, knowing their comrades were fighting for their lives. The end came about 7.00 a.m. Superintendent Pannwitz's interpreter, Josef Chalupsky, was on hand and later described what happened:



Above: **One of the windows facing Resslova Street shattered by machine gun fire shows no sign of damage today** *photo right.*

'Suddenly there was silence up there, an agonizing silence throughout the church. The SS waited a moment and then they went up: they found three parachutists covered with blood. They came out of the church carrying one body and two dying men. They laid the dead man on a church carpet outside, on the pavement. They took the two others to hospital, but they died without having recovered consciousness.

'This was at about seven o'clock in the morning. The Gestapo brought the traitor Curda and Ata Moravec, Mrs Moravec's son who had been arrested on June 17. They showed them the dead man and asked his name. Pannwitz did not know who was hidden in the church: perhaps he was thinking only of Kubis and Gabcik. Curda was silent, confused, ashamed; at last he muttered, "Opalka."

'Meanwhile they were searching the inside of the church for the way into the crypt. The nave was almost destroyed, the windows were broken and the altar overturned. Through loud-speakers set up in the street the Germans called upon the besieged men to surrender, promising that they would be treated as prisoners of war. The men hidden in the crypt said nothing. I do not know how the Gestapo learnt they were there. Possibly from clues inside the church. No sound had come from the crypt during the battle. *(An extra set of clothing had been discovered in the church. Ed.)*

'But now they began to fight: and they knew how to fight. It is said the Germans brought Curda to the only window to tell his former friends to stop firing. It seems that Ata Moravec refused to do so. The parachutists replied with a burst of fire. From that moment on they knew who had betrayed them.

'The loudspeakers and the machine guns were no use. Either someone suggested it to him or Pannwitz himself had the idea of calling for the fire brigade. About eight o'clock, a Nazi officer came to the switchboard where I was waiting and telephoned for the pumps to be sent to Resslova Street. As he left, the officer said to me, "We shall need you in a few minutes. As soon as the firemen get here." '

When the fire brigade arrived at the church it was the intention of the Germans to flood the crypt by hosing water through the small barred ventilation slot. Much against their will, the Czech firemen were forced to help. The SS were already firing into the crypt

Below left: **The balcony, wrecked by gunfire and grenades, defended to the death by Jan Kubis, Adolf Opalka and Jaroslav Svarc.** *Below:* **The narrow stairway to the balcony today.**

Above: **The abortive attempt to smoke out the defenders by introducing a pipe through the 15cm x 105cm ventilator slot (CTK).** *Below:* **Still bearing the marks of machine gun fire, the small opening has become a memorial to Czech patriotism.**

through the small barred window but without effect.

One fireman was ordered to smash in the bars with a hammer; when this was done tear gas cannisters were tossed inside. However, the four Czechs within had a ladder and, as fast as the bombs were thrown in, they were returned to the street. They also did not stop firing from inside which made any direct approach to the window a hazardous operation.

The Germans then set up a floodlight to attempt to blind the defenders but this was shot out before the light had even been switched on. An attempt was then made to introduce smoke into the vault but each time the pipe was inserted through the slot it was pushed out from inside.

All the time, attempts were being made inside the church to reach the four defenders as Josef Chalupsky explains:

'The firing could be heard in the street. I did not want to think about it, but I knew the parachutists in the crypt were fighting a hopeless battle unless they could escape by a tunnel. But I knew the Germans had lined the banks of the Vltava and that they were watching the outfalls of the drains. Even if the parachutists succeeded in finding a way out, death was waiting for them at its mouth.

'The SS came for me. "Come to the church." Once again I went in by the priest's corridor. To one side there was the sacristan's flat: through a small window in the kitchen one could see the inside of the church. An earthquake could not have caused more damage. The door through which Pannwitz and his men had passed, and through which they had fled from the fire of the parachutists hidden in the gallery, was no more than a blackened hole. This door led to the altar, which was separated from the nave, as it is in all Orthodox churches, by a high wooden screen. Now the screen and the altar were overturned and riddled with bullet holes. The ground was strewn with paintings and books and other religious objects.

'It was a baroque church, and it measured roughly a hundred feet by fifty: the main door opened opposite the altar. Close to this entrance a group of SS were leaning over a hole, quite a narrow hole; one of the Gestapo said that the men used it for getting in and out, probably with the help of a ladder.

An SS man said to me, "You're too late." I saw what he meant: by the dark hole there stood a man; he was translating what Pannwitz said into Czech. Leaning forward a little, but not too much, so as to avoid the bullets, he called down the hole, "Surrender! You will not be harmed."

'Silence below: then the parachutists began firing again. The answer was clear. Pannwitz beckoned to a man with a black beard, wearing handcuffs: Dr. Petrek, the priest of the church. The superintendent ordered him to tell the men in the crypt to surrender. The priest hesitated. His eyes had a feverish light, and his pain-racked face showed they had tortured him. "Hurry up. We haven't much time to spare," cried Pannwitz ironically.

'Dr. Petrek looked at us all, took a step towards the hole, and said, "I am ordered to tell you that you must surrender. Therefore I do so. And that nothing unpleasant will happen to you — that you will be treated as prisoners of war."

MALTA
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Left: **The small entrance in the roof of the crypt through which the Germans first tried to reach the Czechs. The defenders utilised the coffin niches to sleep in. Photo taken shortly after the war with a symbolic wreath of thorns and inscription (CTK).** *Right:* **The damage to the floor, caused by the four men in an attempt to break out, has been carefully preserved under glass. Display cases have turned the crypt into a small museum.**

'Now for the first time voices were heard from below. "We are Czechs! We shall never surrender: never, do you hear? Never! Never!"

'Once more a voice from the crypt cried "Never!" and there was a burst of fire.

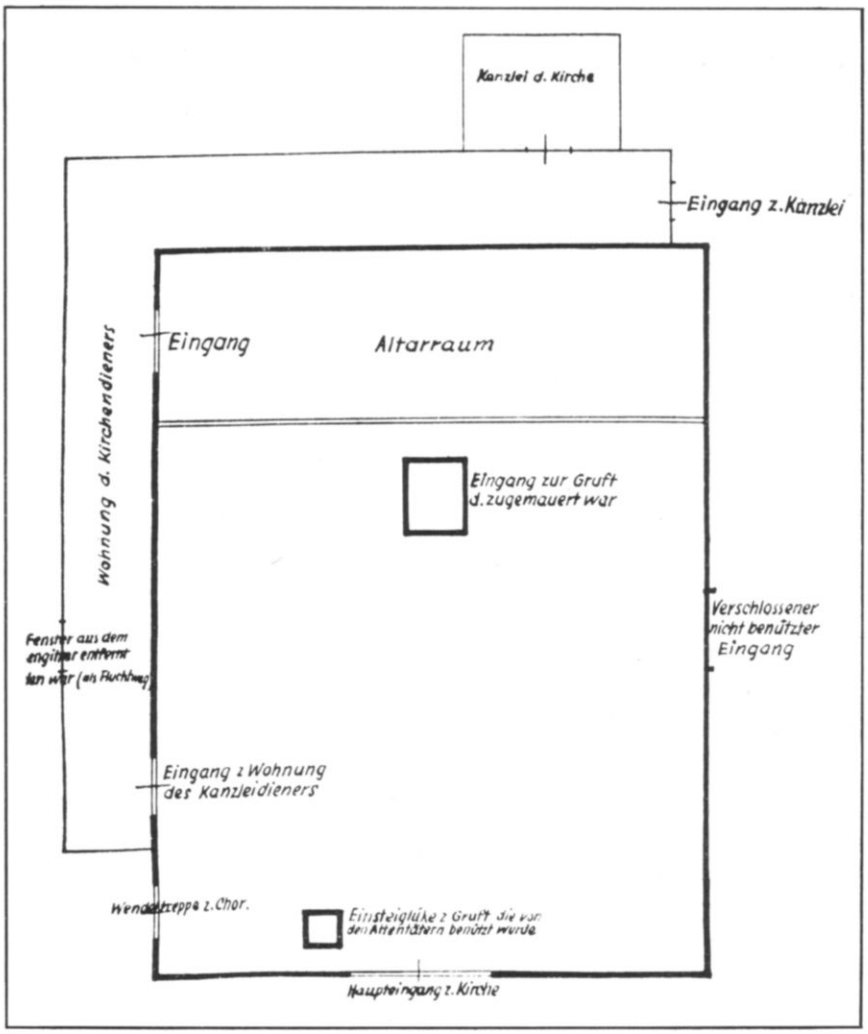
'Petrek stepped back; the SS too. Pannwitz, all ablaze with zeal and fury, was talking to the commander of the SS. I had time to look around. There were pools of blood on the stairs: that was where they had carried down the bodies of the parachutists. Later I went up into the gallery: the floor and the walls were spotted with blood; there were empty cartridge cases everywhere. The gallery was quite large, and it overhung the whole of the nave. At the bottom a bricked-up door led to the adjoining house, but the parachutists had not had time to break through it. Indeed, perhaps they had not wished to do so; their companions were in the crypt, and they had to gain time for them. They fought to the last bullet.

'The men in the crypt were still holding out. Once again the loudspeakers in the street called upon them to surrender: an ultimatum was delivered — if they did not surrender, the whole church would be destroyed and they would die in the ruins. But the parachutists' only reply was a burst of fire.

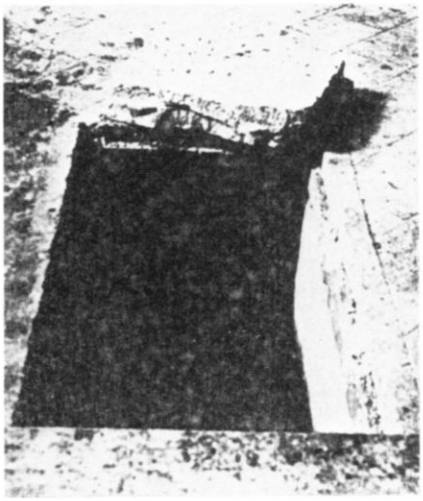
'The SS officers called for volunteers. The group formed with no great haste. At first no one at all came forward; then after a fresh appeal a few men made up their minds and then the commanding officer picked the rest. They were taken into the church. Superintendent Pannwitz addressed them with a few well-chosen words. He spoke of the call of honour and showed them the black hole. A rope was brought; one end was put round a "volunteer's" chest, and he was lowered into the hole. A howl of pain. He had been hit by the parachutists and had to be hauled out with a wounded leg. The hole was so narrow that it did not allow for the smallest movement.

'The superintendent and the SS commander were completely at a loss: they saw they could lower one volunteer after another without achieving anything. And outside, in the street, K. H. Frank was stamping up and down.

'So now in their baffled fury they gave orders for the carpets to be rolled back and the whole floor of the nave examined. In a few minutes the ground was bare; one SS watched the hole and the others searched feverishly. Pannwitz hurried to and fro: there must certainly be a way into the crypt — in former



German plan of the church (which they called the Karl-Borromaus-Kirche) showing the two entrances to the crypt (not to scale).



Above: **The main entrance to the crypt in front of the altar after it was blasted by the Germans.** *Right:* **The stairway is now permanently open for visitors to gain access to the museum.**

times the coffins of the monks had been laid there. How were the coffins taken down? There must be stairs, but where were they? Somewhere at the place where a stone sounded hollow. At last to their delight they found it, a heavy slab concealed beneath the altar.

'The superintendent sent for the firemen and ordered them to break it. Behind them stood the SS, their rifles in their hands. But the slab held firm, and after twenty minutes a fireman tried to explain in pidgin German that it was impossible to deal with it with the tools they had there. The firemen were sent away and the SS ordered in with dynamite. They did something round the slab, then we were told to leave the church. They blasted the slab, and the heavy stone broke in two. An eager, inquisitive Gestapo man pulled away part of the wreckage and peered in to see what was inside — bullets whipped past his head. Pannwitz grinned with satisfaction: there were wooden steps leading into the crypt; this was the way down.

'Once again the SS were called upon. They were to go down the steps, and this time they were sent group by group, in waves of attack. How I admired those men in the crypt: for hours now they must have known that their struggle was hopeless, that sooner or later they would be killed; but they did not give in. They fought like lions.

'The first SS attack failed. When they had gone a few steps down a burst of fire stopped them dead and some of them fell; they could not see clearly, and the stairs being so narrow and steep the wounded men threw the others into disorder. They had to retreat.

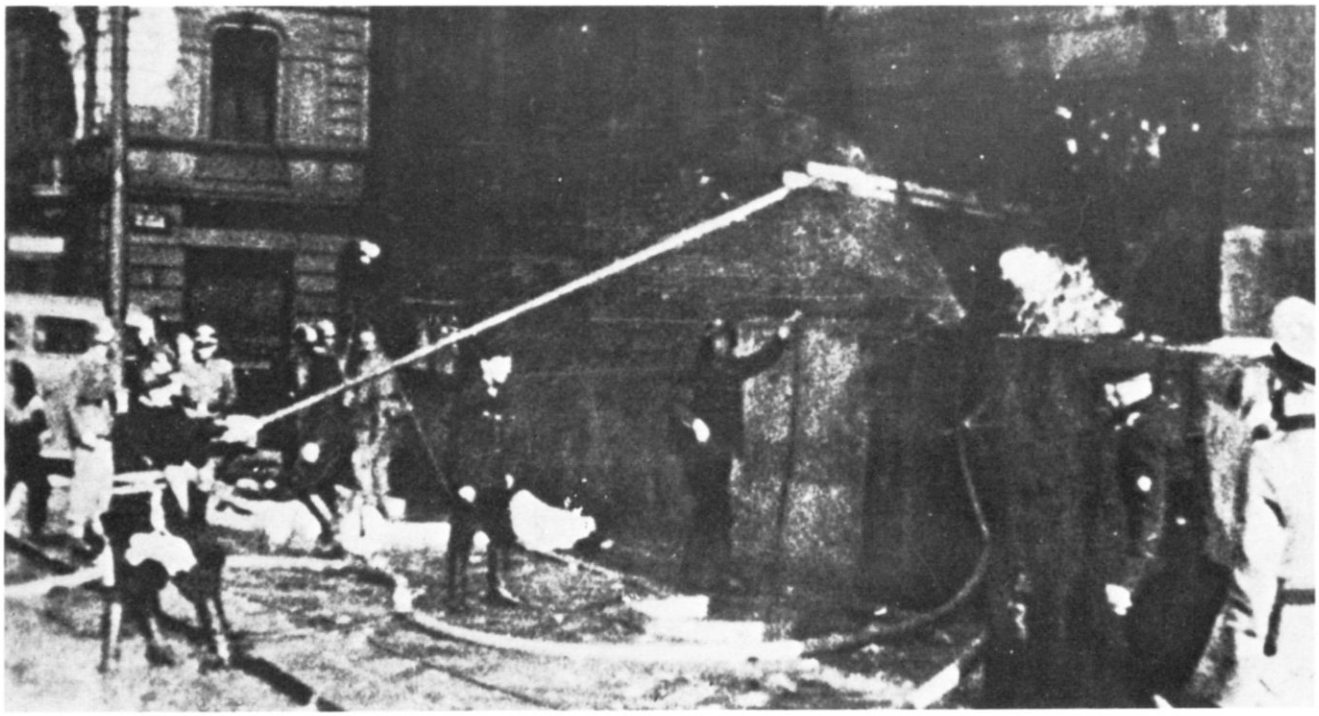
'Meanwhile, in the street, a fireman was ordered to get hold of the ladder the besieged men used for pushing away the hoses. Frank wanted to flood them out — the fireman obeyed. He went along the wall of the church and, just as a parachutist was thrusting at the hose, he grasped the end of the ladder and pulled it out.

'Now the parachutists' position was becoming critical. Water was flowing into the crypt and they no longer had anything to push the hose away with, for the little barred window was too high. At the same time the SS launched another attack, throwing grenades — and steadily the water flooded into the crypt.

'Yet the parachutists went on firing. They hit back without a pause, resisting ferociously. And then suddenly, at about noon, four isolated shots rang out below. After that, a great silence.

'Pannwitz stiffened. He looked at the way

The stairs, still bearing bullet marks, which the Germans tried to descend to the crypt.

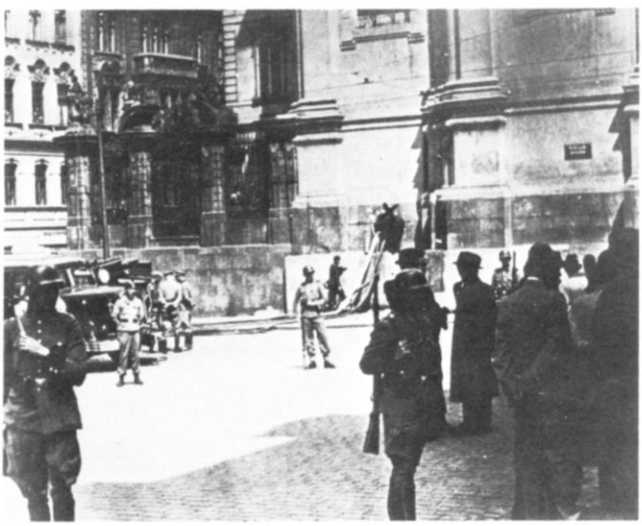


into the crypt and beckoned to an SS officer. The SS hesitated, then sent two soldiers, who went cautiously down: one step, two steps, three. Still silence. They looked back at the officer, who waved them on. They moved down further still, everyone in the church watching them, hardly breathing. They vanished into the crypt and then called up: the officer hesitated no longer; with his revolver in his hand he rushed down. A moment later he reappeared, wet above the knees, and cried, "Fertig!" It was over.

'It was no longer dramatic: it was deeply sad. The firemen took their hoses and went away; the Nazis laid the bodies on the pavement — K. H. Frank wanted to see them. Before they were taken out of the church I looked at their faces. You must certainly have seen the photographs. I did not know their names; they were soaking and covered with blood. Each had kept his last bullet, had killed himself with it and had fallen in the water. There they lay beside one another, in civilian clothes; their eyes open. The vanquished or the victors?

'Later the Gestapo took them away to the Pathological Institute and brought witnesses to identify them there.

Above: **The precise moment the Czech fireman got hold of the ladder. With their means of reaching the ventilator slot (some 11½ft from the ground) denied them, it was the beginning of the end for Valcik, Gabcik, Bublik and Hruby (CTK).** *Below:* **A young Czech family pause at the memorial.**



The battle is over. Fire hoses hang from the small window, the defenders powerless to push them out. The victors stand in small groups discussing the successful outcome of the operation. Soon the bodies will be brought out for all to see (CTK).

Jan Kubis who threw the fatal grenade. He was wounded in the battle on the balcony and died later in hospital.

Josef Valcik — look-out man for the assassination. He died in the crypt.

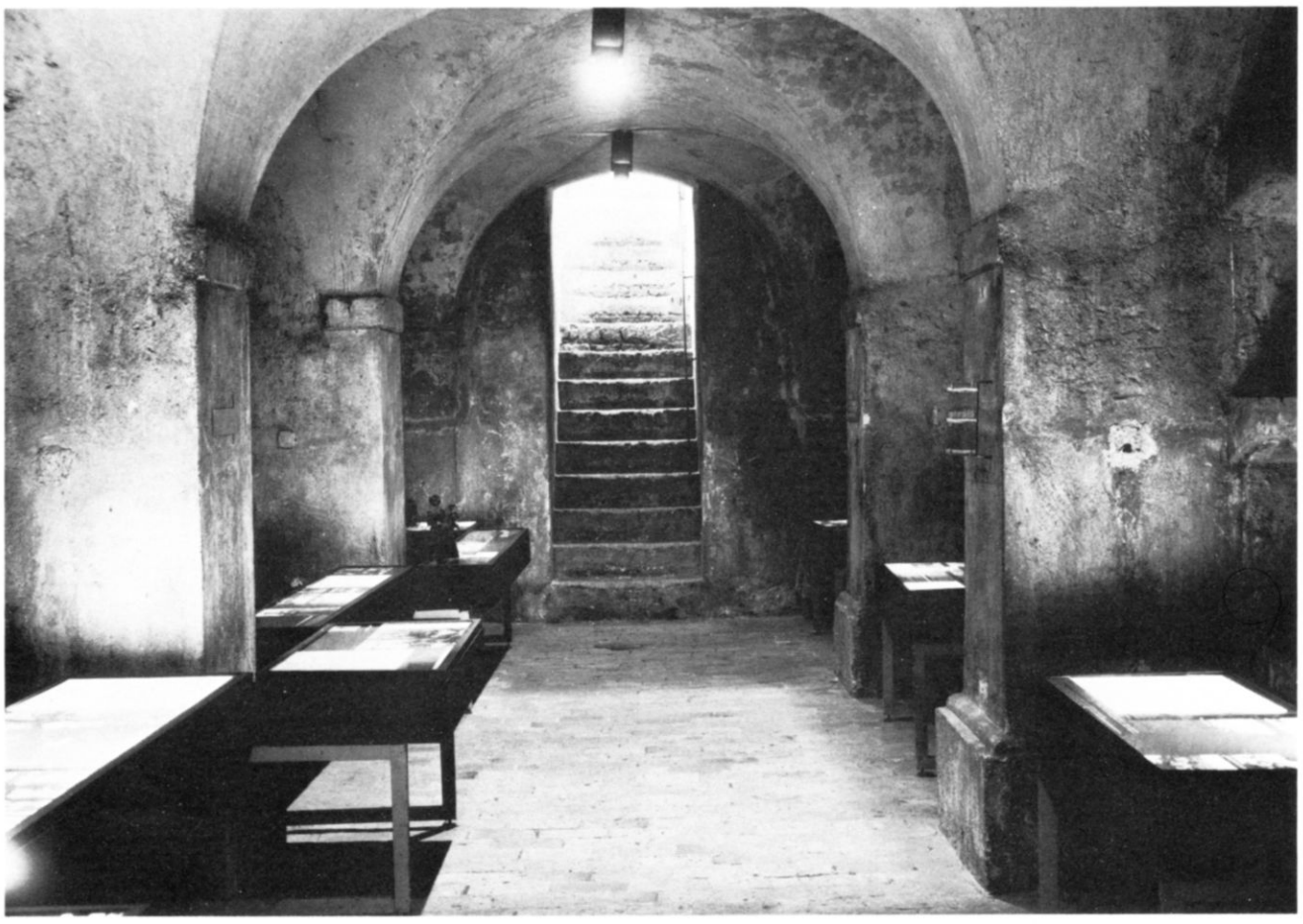
Detailed for the operation from the beginning, Josef Gabcik was the one who had Heydrich in his sights only to have his gun misfire at the critical moment. He held out with the others in the crypt until all their ammunition was exhausted — except for one round each.

Jaroslav Svarc joined the others at the church. Wounded in the balcony battle, he also died in hospital.

Adolf Opalka was another look-out. He was killed outright on the balcony.

Jan Hruby *left* and Josef Bublik played no part in the attack on Heydrich but chose to die in the crypt with the others.

The aftermath of a six-hour battle. Where four brave men died fighting against overwhelming odds — then and now.



'I went down into the crypt, dimly lit by the little window, the one the water had come through. The place was bigger than I had expected. I had to stay on the steps — the floor was quite hidden under the water: a couple of feet deep or rather more. I was too overwhelmed to attend to details of that kind.

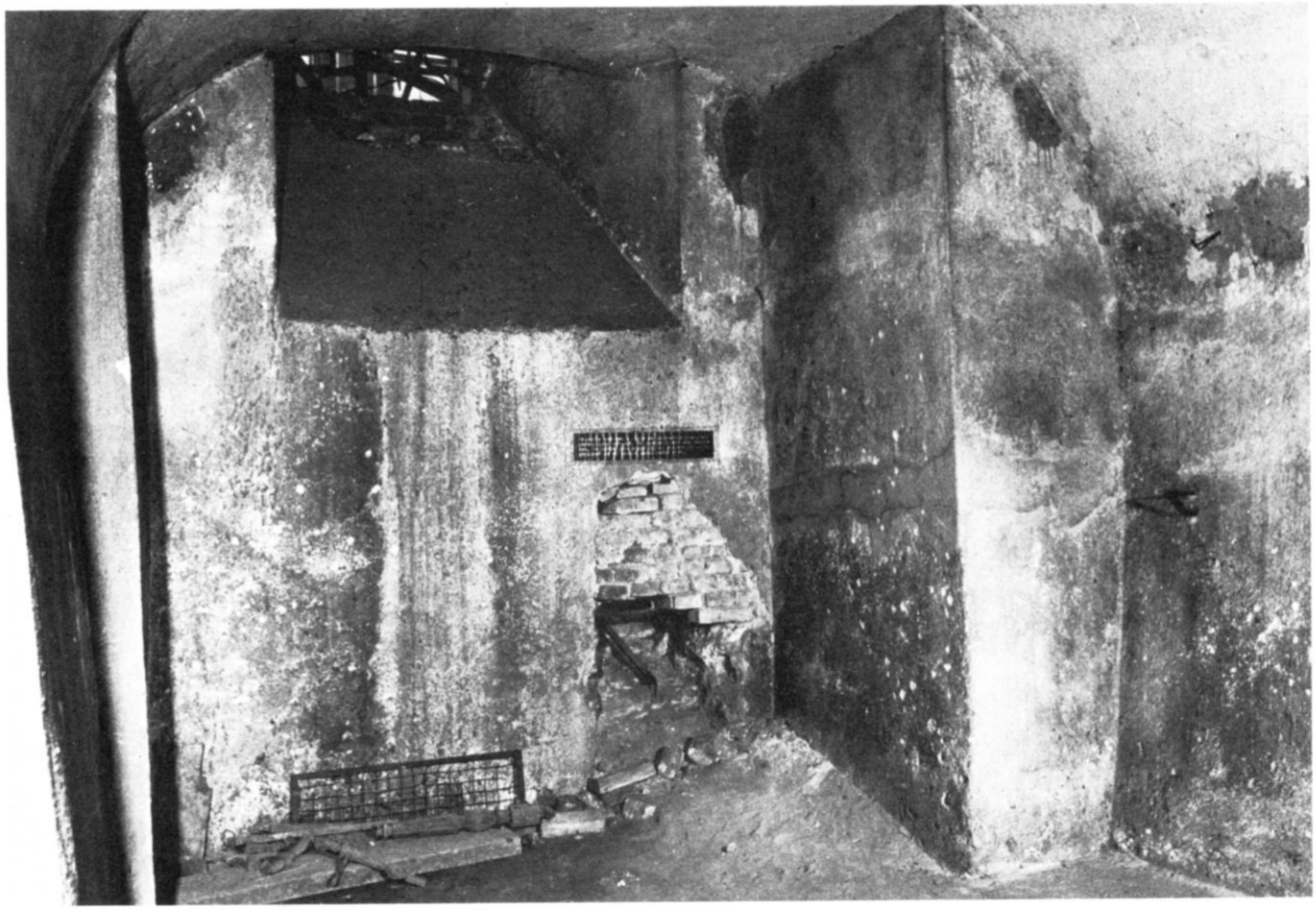
'I lit a match. There were scraps of paper floating in the water — money and identity papers torn to shreds: they had thought of everything. Bloody marks on the walls; bloody marks on the steps. And water everywhere. But the ceiling of the crypt was high, and they could have held out for a long time, probably for a whole day before it was completely flooded. No, it was not the water that beat the parachutists.

'What was it, then? There is only one likely explanation — lack of ammunition. Later the crypt was cleaned out: underclothes were found, stoves, tins of food; but not a single round of ammunition. It is true that the Gestapo report speaks of the flooding but there is not the least foundation for it. No, the parachutists fought to the death. It was only lack of ammunition that put an end to their struggle.

'A heap of bricks was found near the little window. They had vainly tried to pierce the wall of the church: there was no way out. From that moment on, they had known they were condemned.

'I left the church. A German band was marching down Resslova Street, playing a strident Nazi victory march. It was attempting to conceal the Germans' immense disappointment that the parachutists should have chosen their own death. Not one of them would ever speak now.'

The face of a traitor. The Czech informer, Karel Curda, arrowed, (who had been trained in England with the others at Cholmondeley Castle) examines the results of his handywork. Josef Bublik and Jan Hruby (foreground) lie on church carpets on the pavement (CTK).



THE RETRIBUTION

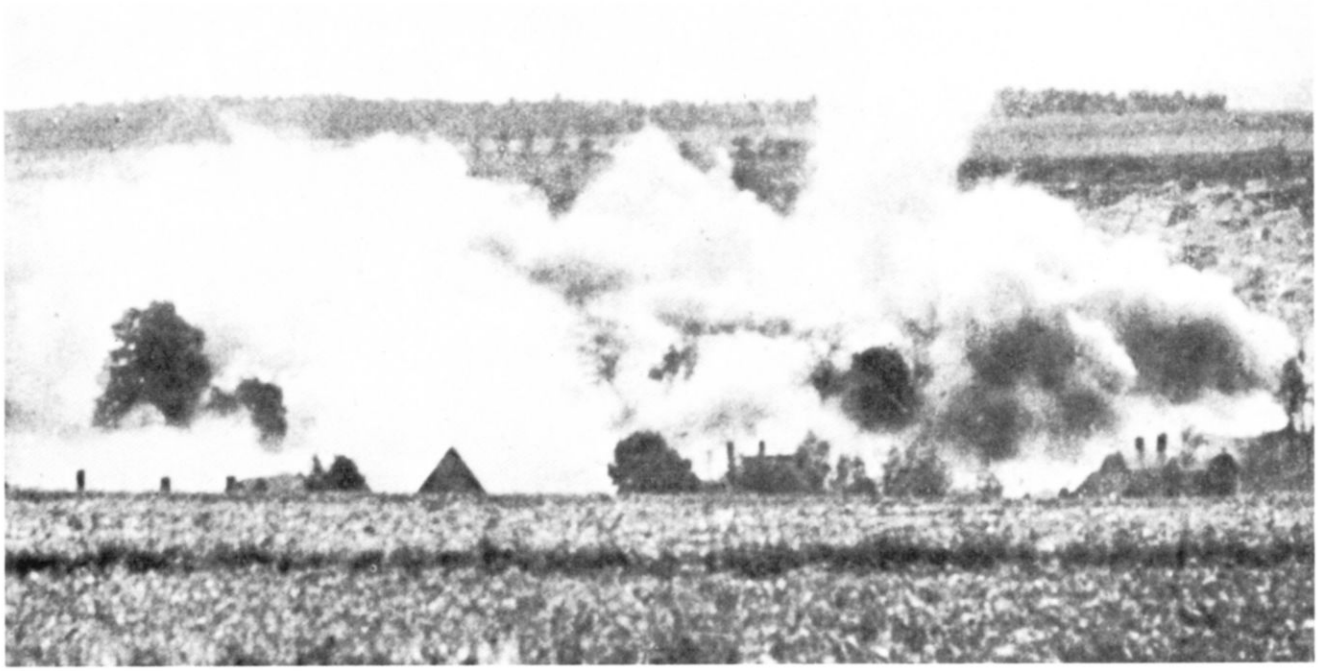
SS-Brigadefuehrer Karl von Truenfeld's unit pose for a victory photograph in Ressel-Gasse (as they called Resslova Street). The Germans lost 14 dead and 21 wounded.

The German's horrific wave of vengeance began from the moment the attack was perpetrated. Athough Hitler had ordered the immediate execution of 10,000 Czechs in reprisal, this was seen by the new acting Protektor Karl Frank to be a counter-productive move at that time when every effort had to be directed towards capturing the assassins. Nevertheless scores of civilians were arrested and tortured in a frantic attempt to get information on their whereabouts.

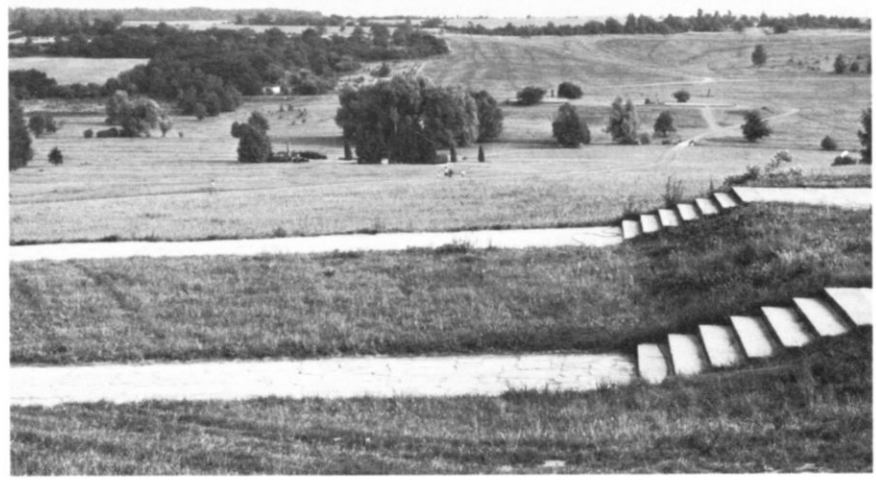
Then, at dawn on June 10, six days after Heydrich had expired, German police surrounded a small village six miles north-west of Prague . . . its name Lidice. All the 88 children were taken from their parents and were subsequently put to death in gas chambers. Their mothers, sixty in all, were shipped to the concentration camps at Ravensbruck, Auschwitz and Mauthausen where they were executed. The men were lined up in the village and summarily shot and buried in a pit at Horak's farm. The whole of Lidice was then dynamited, bulldozed flat and the rubble carted away to leave a barren site which was then grassed over so that no trace of the village remained. The following day a prepared statement was then broadcast: 'In the course of the search for the murderers of SS-General Heydrich, it was ascertained that the population of this village supported and assisted the perpetrators. Apart from the help given to them, the population also committed other hostile acts, such as the keeping of an illegal dump of munitions and arms, the maintenance of an illegal transmitter and hoarding of an extraordinary large quantity of goods which are controlled . . . The male inhabitants have been shot, the women taken to concentration camps, the children put into suitable educational establishments. The buildings have been razed to the ground; the name of the community has been erased.'

Later the same fate befell the smaller village of Lezaky; seventeen men and sixteen women were shot down and fourteen children gassed — just two little girls survived. Afterwards the village was completely obliterated.

Show trials were held in Prague and, on September 3, 1942, Dr. Petrek, Bishop Gorazd and two representatives of the



Above: **A village is murdered. June 10, 1942 the tiny village of Lidice is razed to the ground as a reprisal for the killing of Heydrich.** *Below:* **Thirty-five years later no trace of Lidice remains — only the memorial in the foreground stands as a witness to the atrocity.**



Orthodox church were sentenced to death for providing the church as a refuge for the attackers. Later that month, on the 29th, 252 other Czechs were condemned to death for supporting or sheltering the attackers including Mr. Moravec and his son Ata, the Novaks with their little daughter Jindriska and the Fafek family. The entire families and all the relatives of Valcik and Kubis were rounded up from all over Czechoslovakia including Opalka's father and aunt and taken to the fortress of Terezin en route for the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria where they all disappeared in October 1942. Only Gabcik's family escaped as they lived in Slovakia which was an independent Fascist State where the Germans had little direct contact.

From information received from Karel Curda, the Germans began a massive roundup of the Czech underground network and dozens of operators were arrested and executed. Revenge was also taken with the systematic murder of thousands of Czech political prisoners already held in concentration camps. The price of the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich had been high.

German records state that nineteen officers and 740 other ranks were involved in the battle in Resslova Street but to this total one must add the forces of the security services. Fourteen Germans were killed and twenty-one wounded in the six-hour battle.

Eleven weapons were found in the church two of them being nickel-finished .32 Colt pistols Nos. 539,370 and 540,416 which the Germans proved, after forensic tests, to have been used by Jan Kubis and Josef Gabcik at the scene of the attack. (Jan had shot a policeman during his escape on the bicycle). We wrote to Colt's in America and established that both pistols were part of a shipment of 50 supplied to the British Purchasing Commission in New York on April 28, 1941.

The bodies of the five defenders who died in the church — Opalka, Gabcik, Valcik, Bublik and Hruby — were laid on the pavement outside the church to be photographed. Kubis and Svarc, severely wounded in the first battle on the balcony, were taken to hospital where they died without regaining conciousness. The Svatos family (one of those who had sheltered Gabcik) were brought to the church and forced to identify the bodies; they named two, Gabcik and Valcik. Mrs. Moravec's son Ata, who had already been hideously tortured also identified the two Josefs. The five bodies were then taken to the Prague Pathological Institute for autopsies to be performed. There the heads of the two men who had mounted the actual attack on Heydrich, Kubis and Gabcik were severed from the bodies which were then cremated. The heads were then preserved in alcohol and retained in Gestapo headquarters in the Pecek Palace on Bredovska. At the end of the war the bottles with the heads dissappeared.

The turncoat Karel Curda changed his name to Jerhot, married a German woman and became a trusted associate of the Gestapo who had rewarded him well for his treachery. However his change of name did not deceive the Czech authorities. He was arrested in June 1945 brought to trial and was hanged in 1947.

After the June 18 battle, SS-Oberstgruppenfuehrer Kurt Daluege replaced Karl Frank as Reichprotektor. At the end of the war, Frank was arrested and convicted by a Czech court for the reprisal against Lidice and publicly hanged near Prague on May 22, 1946.

The Germans produced a fully-documented report on the assassination and the attack on the church, complete with photographs, maps and diagrams, many of which are reproduced here. The only copy existing today in the Western world would seem to be the one we traced to the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research in New York and we are indebted to that organisation for permission to reproduce material from their copy. We would also like to thank Lieutenant-Colonel Guy and Captain Symonds of the Army School of Ammunition for their expert analysis of the German photographic evidence of the grenades used in the attack. They told us that although the No. 73 grenade was reintroduced in March 1943 it was again declared obsolete in January 1946.

After the war the Czech government erected a memorial and museum on the site of Lezaky although the village itself was not rebuilt. The rebuilding of Lidice, however, was begun in 1948 on a site a few hundred yards from its original position. As Lidice had been a miner's village, contributions were received from British, Swedish and French trade unionists, the British Union of Mineworkers collecting £32,374 for the 'Lidice shall live' campaign. In 1949, the construction of the new village was completed and the houses in New Lidice were given to every woman and

child who had survived the Nazi concentration camps. The everlasting memory of the atrocity of Lidice was assured when places abroad were renamed after the destroyed village: Lidice in Illinois and South Dakota, USA; the suburb Lidice of Havana, Cuba and other locations in Brazil, South Africa, Columbia, Eduador, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Venezuela and Panama.

In Prague itself the church of St. Cyril and St. Methodus was opened as a memorial shrine to Czech resistance in July 1966. Although the present Government plays down the fact that the operation was mounted from England (i.e. the West), each year High Mass is celebrated on June 18. The crypt is open to visitors daily and one now descends via the large entrance blown open by the Germans to a small museum with photographs and personal effects displayed in showcases. The damage inside the church has been repaired but the wall around the ventilator slot still bears the marks of German bullets. An inscribed plaque has been mounted just above and flowers are in evidence all the year round.

The ancient royal castle of Hradcany, once Heydrich's headquarters, is now the seat of the Czech government and the galleries and historical rooms are open to tourists except for the part occupied by the President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The Cathedral of St. Vitus, an integral part of the castle, contains the ancient Czech coronation jewels. According to legend, anyone who wears the Czech royal crown illegally will perish. When Heydrich arrived in Prague in September 1941, he paid a visit to the jewel room and tried on the crown . . . with fatal consequences!

Heyrich died in Bulovka Hospital, now the largest in Prague. After his death the Germans erected a memorial on the corner where the attack had taken place although this was removed in 1945. The sharp hairpin bend was considered a danger to the increasing post-war traffic and road works were carried out to decrease the angle, moving the curb 3-4 metres from its May 1942 position.

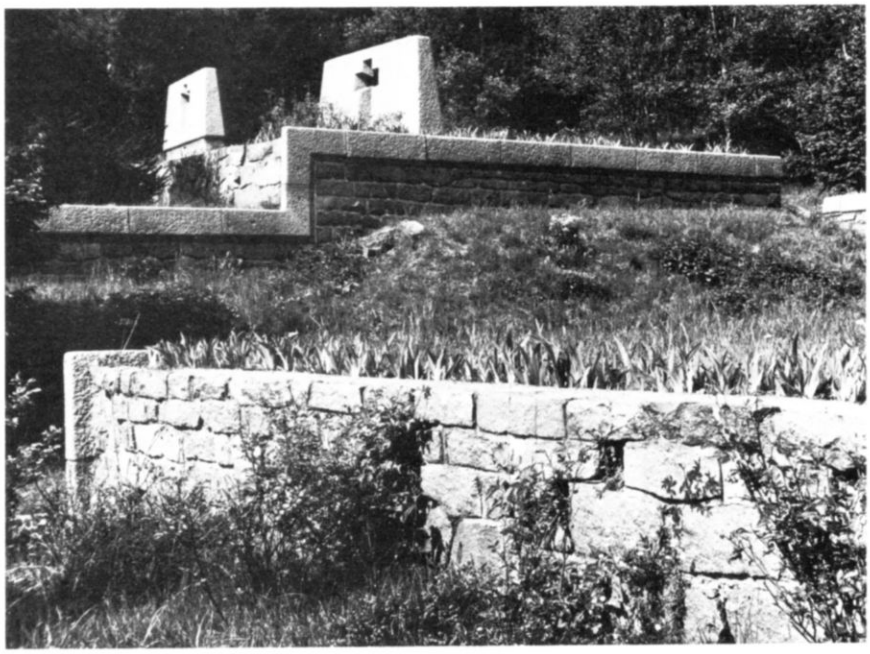
Except for the renaming of the small road where Klein chased Gabcik (to Gabcikova and Valcikova), these locations must remain largely as they were thirty-six years ago. Naturally the Germanic street names were obliterated in 1945. The butcher's shop is now a small warehouse. Heydrich's private residence, the villa at Panenske Brezany north of Prague, is not open to visitors being used by a scientific research institute.

Other significant locations in the story, the flats of the Novaks in the renamed Novakovych and the Moravecs in Biskupcova, are marked with memorial plaques to the death of both families.

One of the briefcases, used to carry the weapons, is now preserved in the Military Museum in Prague and other items are believed to be in the museum store. We could not discover the whereabouts of the bike, put on display by the Gestapo in the Bata shop window.

The present location of Heydrich's Mercedes Benz is not known; in Czechoslovakia it is believed to be owned by a private person possibly a film producer and the editor has been unable to confirm the rumour that the car is now somewhere in northern England.

We visited locations in England concerned in the story in April 1978. At Ightfield, where Jan and Josef had spent many happy hours prior to their mission, the house of the Ellison family still stands close to the crossroads in the centre of the small rural village. The house, which belongs to the Lonsdale Estate, was empty and we discovered, sadly, that Mrs Jessie Ellison had died in November 1973 and her husband, Albert, in February 1976. However we traced one of the daughters, now Mrs Edna Ruscoe, to a nearby cottage and it was from her that we learned that of the two young Czechs, it was Josef who was most fluent in English. She still remembers the early war years well and indicated in which room the boys stayed in the house. We were most surprised to find that her sister, now Mrs Coombs, lives not ten miles from our office!



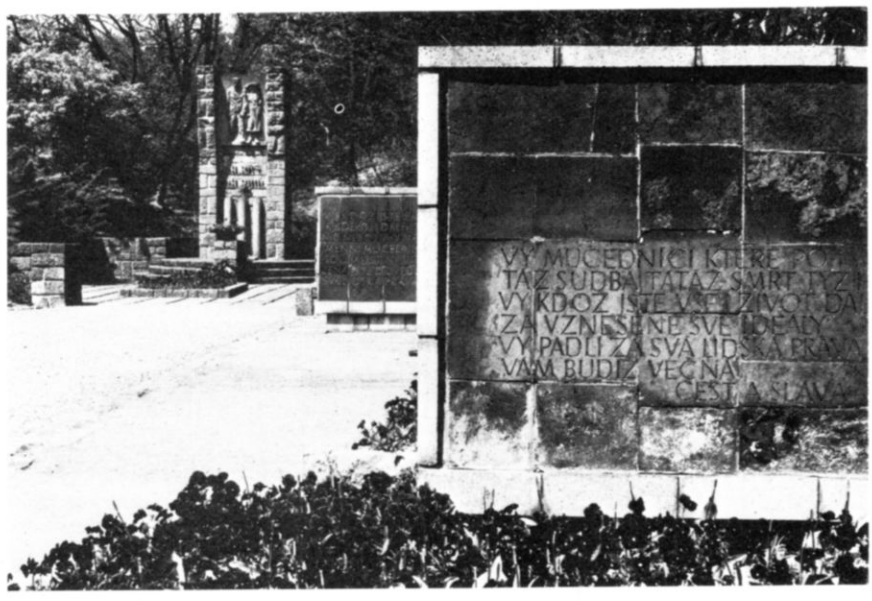
The village of Lezaky was also obliterated. Now memorial stones have been erected to mark the site of each house demolished.

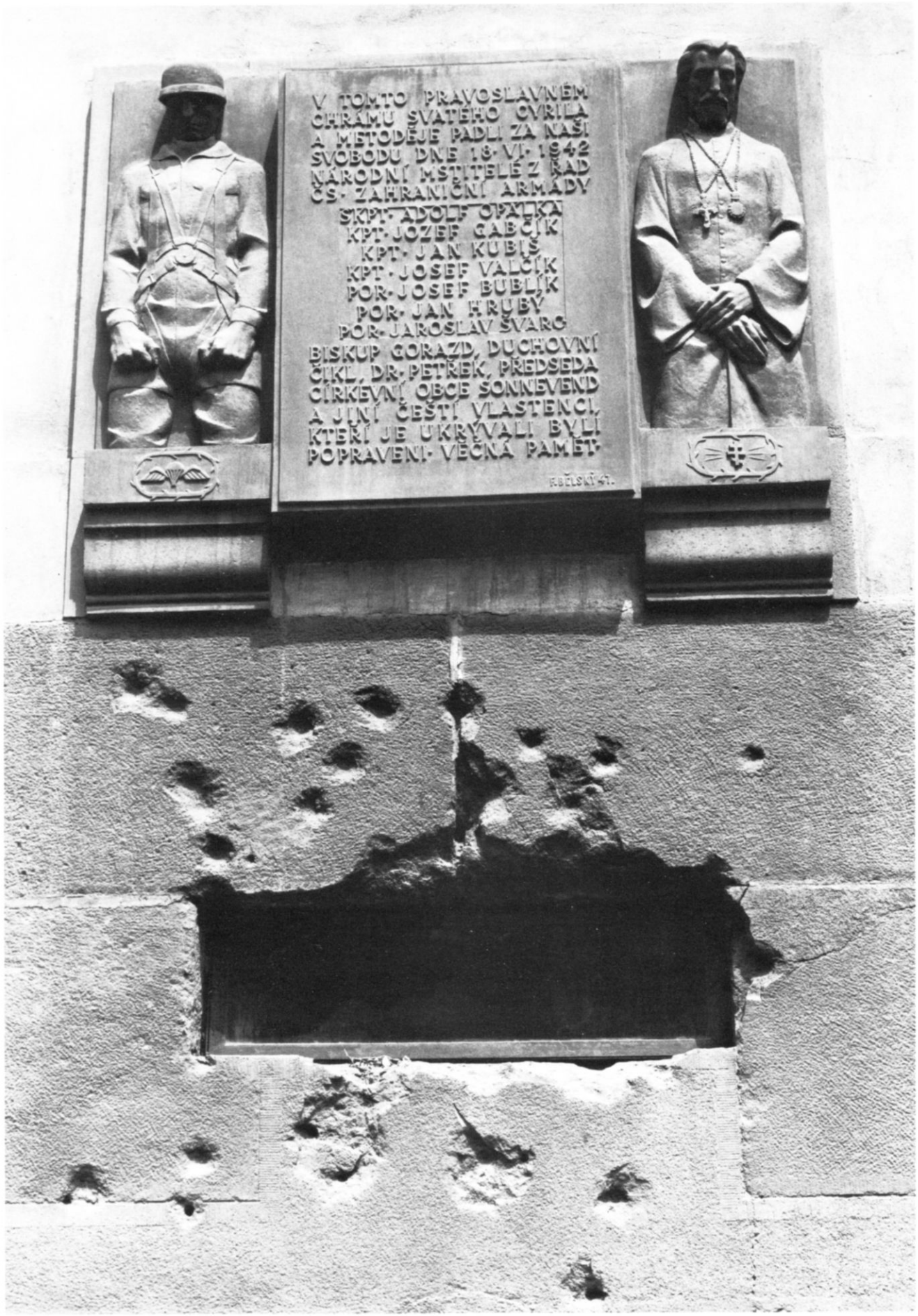
From Ightfield we travelled a few miles north along the A49 from Whitchurch to reach the site of the Czech camp which had been situated in the grounds of Cholmondeley Castle. The castle is owned and occupied by the Marquis of Cholmondeley but the grounds are open to visitors from March 26 to October 8 during the afternoon. There the site of the Czech camp, which we were told was completely tented, is now marked by a memorial stone.

We made ceaseless enquiries about the grave of Heydrich in the Invaliden Cemetery, now in East Berlin. The East German authorities stated that the grave could no longer be located and other accounts state that all the Nazi headstones were obliterated in 1945. An enquiry to Frau Heydrich (now living in Germany under her maiden name) has gone unanswered.

Several films have been made of the incident; one East European version being recreated on the actual 1942 locations although this film has not been shown in the UK. The English version 'Operation Daybreak' was made by Warner Bros. Several books have been written on the assassination, the most well known, which was used as the basis for the English film, being 'Seven Men at Daybreak' by Alan Burgess published in 1960 by Evans Brothers Ltd. of London. In 1969, Grossman Publishers of New York brought out 'The Assassination of Heydrich' by Jan G. Wiener but the best for original research is the book with the same title by Dr. Miroslav Ivanov, a Czech lecturer at Charles University Prague. Dr. Ivanov was able to interview personally many eye witnesses and other people concerned in the affair, especially some of those who knew the resistance workers executed by the Germans. We are indebted to his publishers, Hart-Davis, MacGibbon of London for permission to include extracts from the book and to Dr. Ivanov who generously gave the editor every assistance in the preparation of this story.

The central memorial at Lezaky stands on the spot where the villagers were executed — all perished except for two little children.





A poignant memorial plaque to one of the most heroic yet tragic incidents of the Second World War.

AFTER THE BATTLE

WAR FILMS

IT'S ALL A GAME

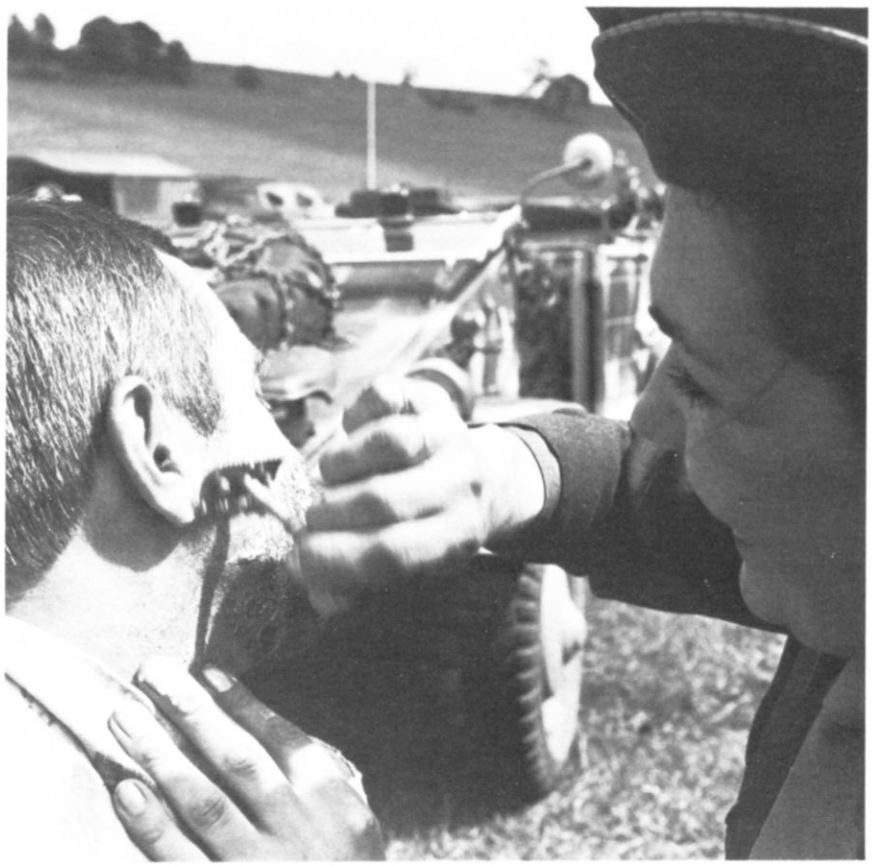
Above: **The Stuart Mk 5A/1 owned by Mike Ross, founder of the British WWII Battle Re-Enactment Associate, in action for the film at the Military Vehicle Conservation Group rally at Thruxton in June 1978.**

In November 1976, we published a feature on the formation of the World War II Historical Re-enactment Society in the United States. Participants are all military collectors and enthusiasts who participate in and re-create battles, both real and fictional, of the Second War in authentic detail.

Ideas travel fast. Mike Ross, who founded his militaria company 'Military Marine' in 1972, read the article and was immediately attracted to the idea of forming an associated group in the UK. He made contact with the American organisation and the outcome was BRA — the Battle Re-enactment Associate — a title deliberately chosen to give an easily-remembered abbreviated form. (Support BRA!)

Battle recreations are a logical extension to the interests of both military vehicle restorers and uniform collectors and BRA is organised into national groupings according to interest. There is, for example, the German section 'Sturmgruppe Adler'. The Gruppe is split into two commands — the northern (all areas north of London) under Feldwebel Allan Swatman and the southern command led by Feldwebel Mike Passmore. The next largest group is that of the United States forces and some thirty GIs and WACs serve in the 29th Infantry, 5th Rangers, 101st Airborne and 2nd Armored Division. Mike Ross himself, although founder member and chairman of the overall 180-strong association, acts as 'Sergeant' in charge of the twelve members of the British Airborne unit.

All new members begin with the rank of private and great emphasis is placed on the original army command structures and ranks are awarded according to the strength of each formation ie section-size, platoon-size and so on. There are no paper colonels in this army!



Lieutenant Tina Moore prepares Mike for the filming using original army soap and razor.

A BRA war game held at Charing in Kent was filmed and clips *below* included in the film. John Arnold drives his own jeep with members of the British 1st Airborne Army. Corporal Dave Humphreys hangs on in the front seat.

Authenticity is the watchword of BRA and, indeed, the conditions of membership state that hair and sideburns are out — as Mike explained to the editor they strive to obtain accuracy in everything they do and wear — even down to their underpants!

All public battle re-enactments are scripted in advance and the system of rules devised by the US organisation (i.e. coupons handed out when someone is 'killed') have been adopted. However the British group is at a disadvantage over their American counterparts when it comes to firearms. Ownership of rifled weapons and pistols in the UK has been severely curtailed by local police chiefs during the past ten years, some forces having a particular objection to semi-automatic weapons such as the MI Rifle and Carbine, even for authentic collection purposes. Also the special Ministry of Defence permits, once issued to some people for the possession of deactivated fully automatic weapons, have all been withdrawn. Therefore Japanese replicas and smooth-bored rifles, which, when chambered for .410 cartridges are legally-classified as shotguns, fill the gap.

Early in 1978, Arundel Film Productions Ltd. decided to make a documentary on the group's activities entitled *It's all a Game* aimed at TV and possibly to be shown as a

Below: **Police objections necessitated all filming involving automatic weapons be done separately after the main 'Battle of Molash' had been fought. These shots were then cut in at the editing stage.**

supporting picture on the cinema circuits. The film was to depict how ordinary civilians with varied jobs have combined together in a harmless yet totally absorbing hobby even to the extent of recruiting their wives and girl friends. Climax of the film was to be the 'Battle of Molash' — so-named after its location near the village of that name in Kent. The scene for the filming was to be 22-acre farm owned by John Jenkins and, additionally, it was planned to make this a public event. Being a bona-fide film, it was hoped that, in this case, there would be no restriction on the hire of automatic weapons from the theatrical firm of Bapty and Co. However when the local police learned that the public would be watching the filming they objected strongly and, in the end, scenes using fully automatic weapons firing blanks had to be staged later and cut into the final film. Altogether the film crew spent seven days at Molash with additional scenes being shot in Wiltshire, Bromley and Charing village in Kent, Worthing in Sussex, north London and at the Military Vehicle Conservation Group's annual rally at Thruxton airfield.

Like all projects mounted by enthusiasts, costs can easily escalate in the effort to obtain authenticity — thousands of rounds were fired — and Mike personally contributed a hefty sum towards the battle re-creation to ensure the books finally balanced.

Above: **Setting up for the German emplacement shot and** *right* **as it appeared in the film. Eddie Kenton (see ATB No. 20), usually a Feldwebel but dressed as a Colonel for the film, enjoys himself firing the 7.92mm MG 34.**

No hands Kevin 'Badger' Ross triumphantly crushes an American amphibious jeep — or is it an old Ford Anglia? (That serial number

seems familiar!) Unfortunately Peter Ferber was almost a real casualty . . . the jar of the Stuart hitting the ground nearly broke his leg.

Above: The Allies storm the hill as the Battle of Molash nears its climax. Roy Halsall's White scout car in the foreground. One of the mobile film units can be seen on the skyline.

Below: Dick Budgen (left) of Action Incorporated was brought in to stage the more dangerous stunts. This is a simulated explosion using a cork special effects charge.

On July 2, 1978, numerous restored military vehicles, including Mike's Stuart tank (which appeared in *The Dirty Dozen*), were assembled in the valley where the battle was to be fought. Six camera crews were detailed to cover the action, two of which were mounted in vehicles on each side and German and Swedish TV also sent film crews to document the documentary. As the stills show, the 'battle' turned out equally as realistic as any large budget film and, at the same time, a lot of fun was had by all

In all, filming spread over some three months with another four weeks spent in post production editing etc. The result is 35 minutes of excellent entertainment (it seems like an hour) complete with a paunchy Dutchman playing a realistic General Patton. The opening sequence is such a laugh that it would be a pity to spoil it by describing it here and the film is dotted with numerous incidents. It ends with a marvellous period sequence filmed at 'The Last Chance Dance' organised by BRA and held the evening before the big battle. The printed invitation stated that the date was 1944 and tickets were priced at a nostalgic thirty shillings. All participants were appropriately uniformed being greeted by 'Snowdrops' at the cafe venue which overlooked the valley which was to be the following day's battleground. A female impersonator 'Marlene Dirt-track' helped recreate the mood of the 1940s, Mike Ross and Dave Humphreys carrying the deception through to the end by dropping 'her' at the local railway station still dressed in American and German uniforms! Producer Cleeve Barr and Director David Percy hope to sell the film for showing in 1979 so look out for *It's all a Game.*

Membership of BRA cost £5.00. Its ideals are non-political and non-profit making and its purpose is to keep alive the traditions created by combat soldiers and to show the public what the vehicles and men of the Second World War looked like in action. Membership entitles participation in battle simulations, receipt of the BRA newsletter and the opportunity to meet others who share similar interests. For application form write to WWII Battle Re-enactment Associate, 6 Hamilton Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 7HB or telephone 01-300 9159.

Every battle must have its General Patton — played here by an anonymous Dutchman.

Above: **The troops arrive for 'The Last Chance Dance'.** *Below:* **Marlene 'Dirt-track' entertains.**

AFTER THE BATTLE

WRECK RECOVERY

1978 SIKORSKI SEQUEL
LIBERATOR PROP RECOVERED

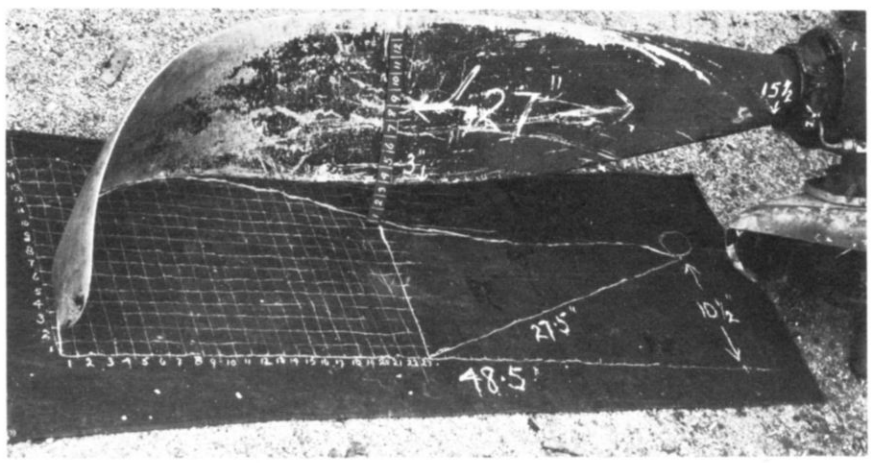
During the research for our May 1978 story on the death of the Polish General Wladyslaw Sikorski, we realised that it was possible that one part of Liberator AL523 still remained on the seabed. The crash report, prepared by Count Lubienski in 1943 (the Polish liaison officer in Gibraltar), mentioned that one propeller remained too deeply buried to warrant recovery. In view of the fact that all the rest of the wreckage was scrapped after expert examination at Farnborough, the editor's fertile brain was immediately taken up with the idea of mounting a search operation to find the sole missing propeller.

When we first arrived in Gibraltar in 1977, we made enquiries about any post-war dives to locate the propeller. Because the crash site lies directly in line with the runway, close to a fluorescent marker buoy on which aircraft approaching from the east line up for landing, private diving is prohibited in the area. The strong northerly current can also easily sweep divers into Spanish territorial waters creating an additional hazard. However when we made contact with Conductor Marc Moody of the RAOC, who ran the Joint Services Sub-Aqua Club, he said there would be no problem for the services club to make dives on the spot. It was subsequently agreed that *After the Battle* magazine would finance the cost of the dives to locate the missing propeller.

On Friday, November 25, 1977, the club hired the *Girl Prudence* and set out for the crash site as defined by the map from the Court of Inquiry *(see After the Battle No. 20)*. Conductor Moody later wrote to us to report that 'the weather turned against us a bit and as well as having to combat a strong current (as usual in that area) we had a strong wind and a heavy sea. As we had put a lot of effort into planning the dive, we decided that one might as well continue and we therefore laid down our grids according to our pre-arranged plan which was to begin on the wreck site and spread outwards. The area where the plane crashed is now just bare sand and our continued searches found nothing. It was not until late afternoon when the last group of divers went in that we met with any success. The dive went according to plan but with the same results as our previous dives when the divers came across a badly encrusted propeller buried in the sand with only one blade showing. The blade was bent, about 55 inches long although, as time was running out, they did not manage to take accurate measurements. Bearings were taken for the site as it was decided not to buoy it because of the Spanish fishermen who collect them!'

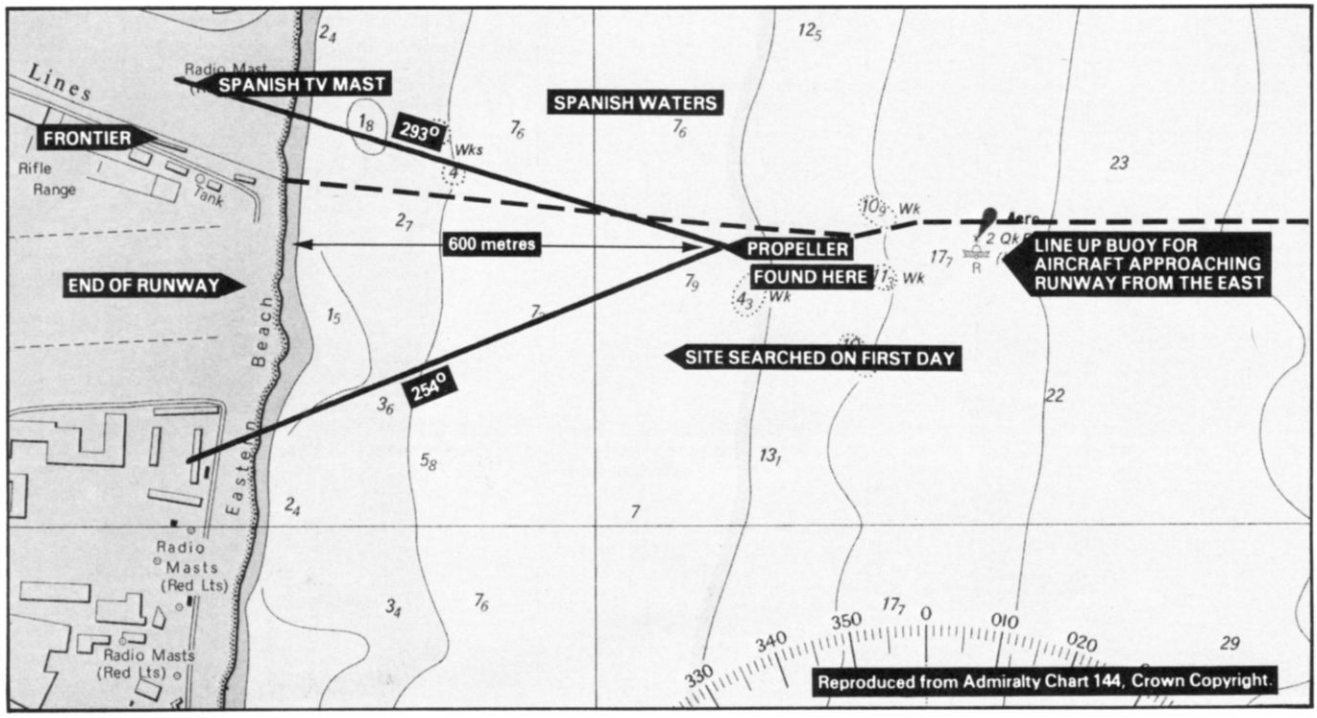
Except for research with General Dynamics in America (successors to Consolidated the original makers) to establish the type of propeller fitted to Liberator LB-30-21 (the serial number was changed in RAF service to AL523), no further action was taken in Gibraltar until the editor returned to the Rock in August 1978 to publicise the launch of our Gibraltar edition. Once there, it was decided to entrust the recovery operation to a fifteen-man team from RAF Halton and Cranwell (plus one man from North Coates) which had just arrived at Gibraltar on a ten-day diving expedition. When the editor explained our plan the team were very enthusiastic to make it their first project.

A suitable vessel from which to dive was found in the ex-WWII 72ft HDML patrol boat the *Fantasia*, moored in one of the old destroyer pens in Gibraltar harbour with its



Top: **The sole surviving piece of wreckage from Liberator AL523, in which General Sikorski met his death on July 4, 1943, is raised to the deck of the Fantasia on August 8, 1978. We were helped in identifying the propeller by the photograph *above* taken in 1943 of one of the three salvaged at the time.**

Above: The first day. The Fantasia anchored in the approximate crash position off the eastern end of the Gibraltar runway. Devil's Tower RAF Camp and the Admiralty radio-transmitting masts in the foreground.



Bearings taken to re-orient the search on the second day — the end windows on a block of flats and the Spanish TV mast.

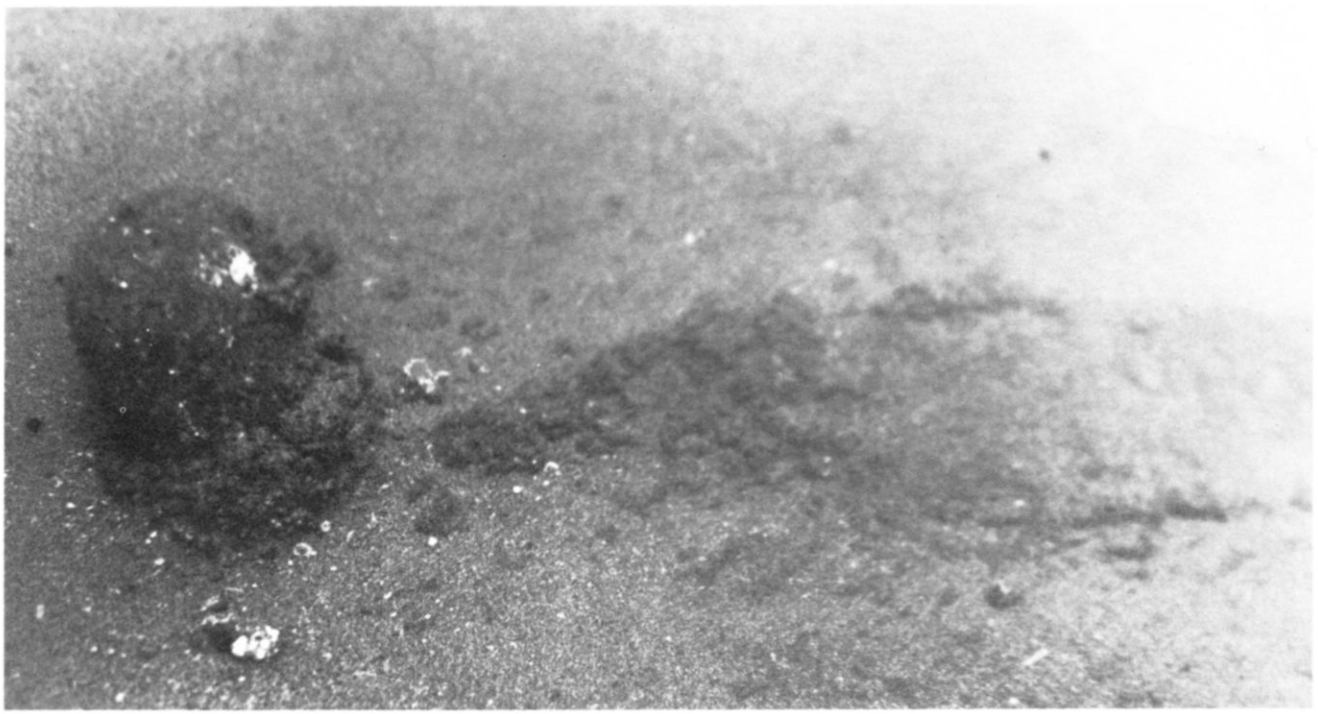
enthusiastic ex-Navy captain Mel Jones. Although the boat, which had been built by William Blackmore at Bideford in 1944, was subsequently converted to a motorised yacht in 1948 by the Hon. Mrs. Bruce, it still retained its twin Gardner 8L3 diesels and was very much in character with our project. Since its purchase by Mel Jones in 1974, it has been equipped with virtually every navigational and electronic aid compatible with its role as an offshore survey vessel. It seems that Mel spends his time sculling around the Mediterranean and was recently based at Malta where he raised a Spitfire propeller.

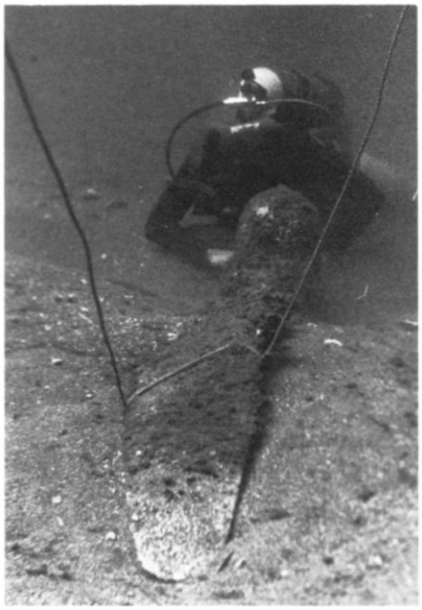
Monday, August 7 found the team ready and waiting at Coaling Island (scene of the sabotage operation by Martin Munoz on June 30, 1943 — *see After the Battle No. 21).* The name is rather ambiguous as it is really a large square storage jetty within the harbour linked to the shore by a wide stone causeway. By 1.00 p.m. the *Fantasia* had circumvented the Rock to Backstrap Bay where it anchored just south of the runway and several hundred yards off Eastern Beach which was packed with holidaymakers. However, although diving continued in relays all afternoon, following a square-pattern grid which had been laid down to guide the swimmers, the propeller could not be re-located. The team, led by Flying Officer Jim Arnold, arrived back at Coaling Island with spirits deflated. Nevertheless, acting on additional information from Sergeant Kit Keltel, RAF, of the resident sub-aqua club, who had found the propeller in the November 1977 dive, a revised plot was given to Captain Jones for the following day.

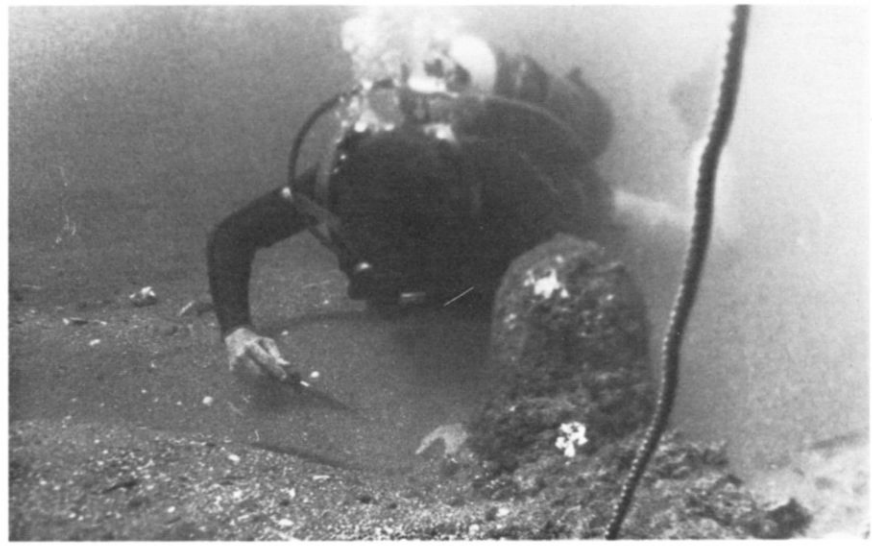
That evening, events took a different turn. In a small place like Gibraltar news travels fast; our issue No. 21 had already been enthusiastically received with the editor following Jeremy Thorpe as a news item on the nine o'clock TV news a few days before! Although we had not intended to make a secret of the exploration of the Sikorski crash site, it was decided not to announce anything until we were certain the propeller could be found. Nevertheless news that divers were operating in a military zone (within full view of bathers on Eastern Beach) and that the vessel had been chartered by *After the Battle* was not long in reaching the ears of the local press and we promptly received a late-night visit while lounging at our historic Rock Hotel. We were told that the story was going round Gibraltar town that we were diving

The activities of the Fantasia were carried out in full view of a packed Eastern Beach.

Above: **The second day. Sergeant Brian Morley (right) prepares to dive.** *Below:* **The propeller on the sandy sea bed, undisturbed for thirty-five years.**







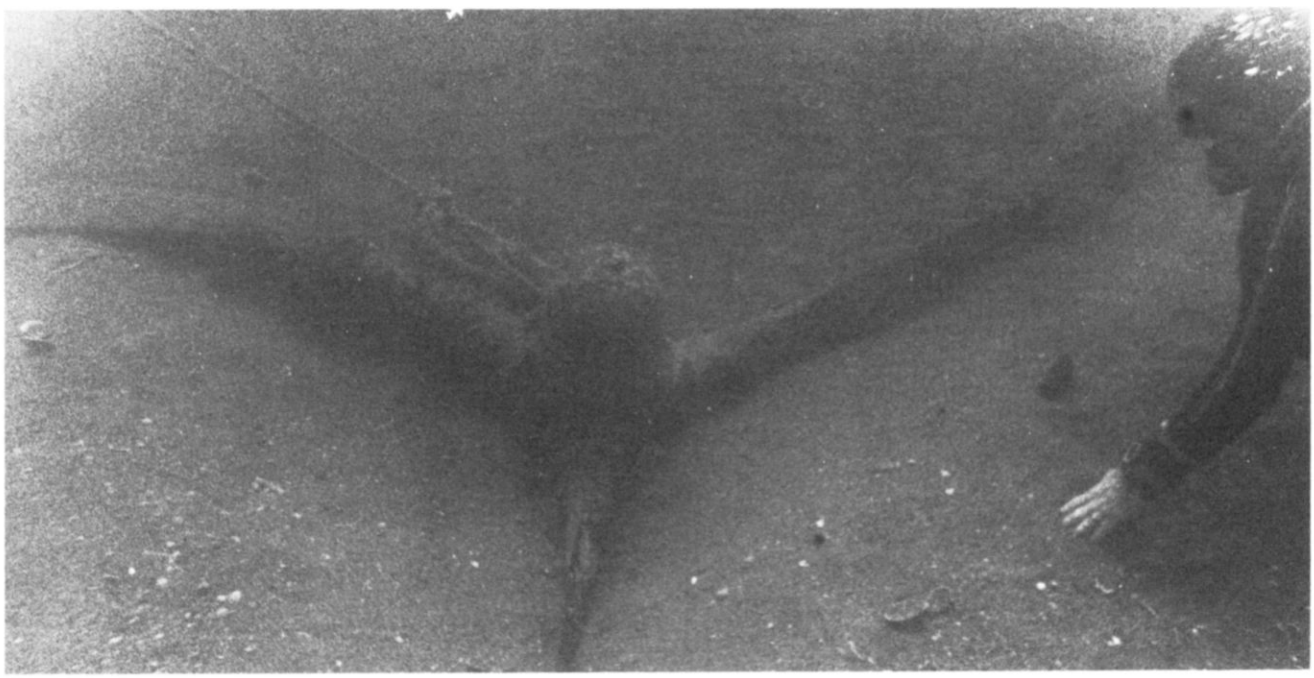
After buoying the position, sand covering the buried blades was scraped away. The diver is Technician Apprentice Hedley Watson.

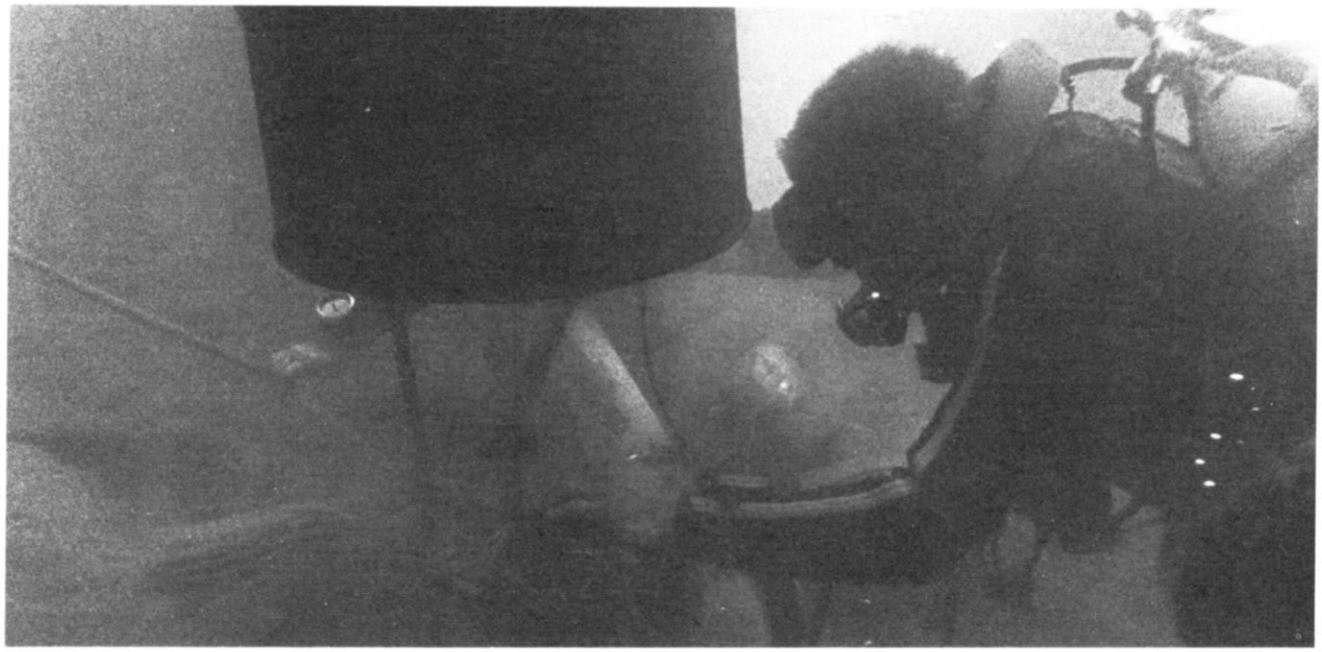
looking for skeletons! Admittedly five bodies had not been recovered in July 1943 but the possibility that we would find these thirty-five years later when divers at the time could not seemed to the editor to be ludicrous in the extreme and this rumour was promptly scotched. Nevertheless a news item on our search operation appeared in the following morning's edition of the Gibraltar Chronicle.

Next day the editor, having other engagements ashore, detailed his son to cover the day's operations on his first solo *After the Battle* assignment. This is his report:

'12.30 p.m. *Fantasia* anchored in new position. Depth 4½ fathoms (27 feet). Bottom was found to be clear, flat sand. The shot line was placed with reference to the revised position on the chart. After four pairs of divers had been down, Mel Jones did not think the line was in the correct position so he went out in the inflatable with a hand-held compass and advised the team they were not on the exact spot. Fresh transits were taken and the line re-sited. The next pair of divers, Sergeant Terry Newcombe and SAC Nick Lewis, immediately located the prop with two blades buried about fifteen feet away from the line. Indeed the propeller was visible from the surface. Time 2.45 p.m. However, as the

Above: **A rope was then secured around the boss and a line attached from the Fantasia to pull the propeller from the sand** *photo below.*



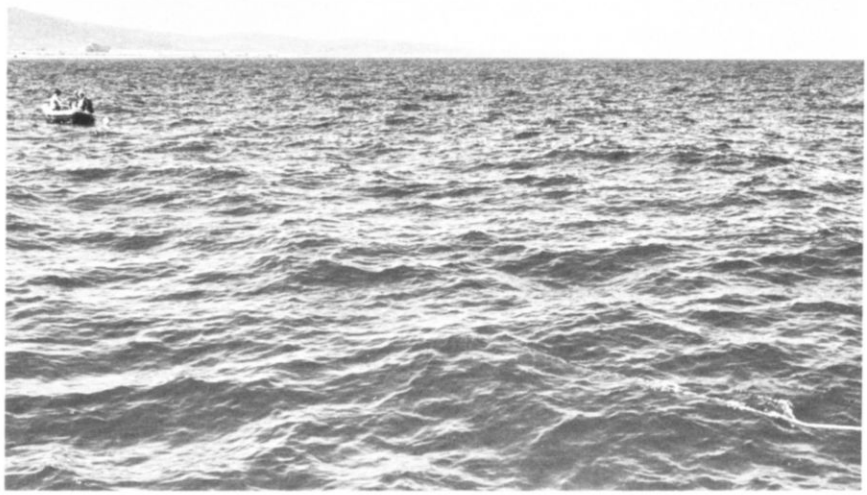


position was directly in line with the runway, a line was brought from the *Fantasia* to pull the propeller underwater to a safer anchorage. One forty-gallon oil drum was then roped around boss but, although this raised the propeller from the sand, it gave only neutral buoyancy and six life jackets had to be added to bring the whole lot to the surface. It was then lashed to the Gemini rubber dinghy and towed to slack water where it was lifted on deck using the derrick and winch at 4.45 p.m.'

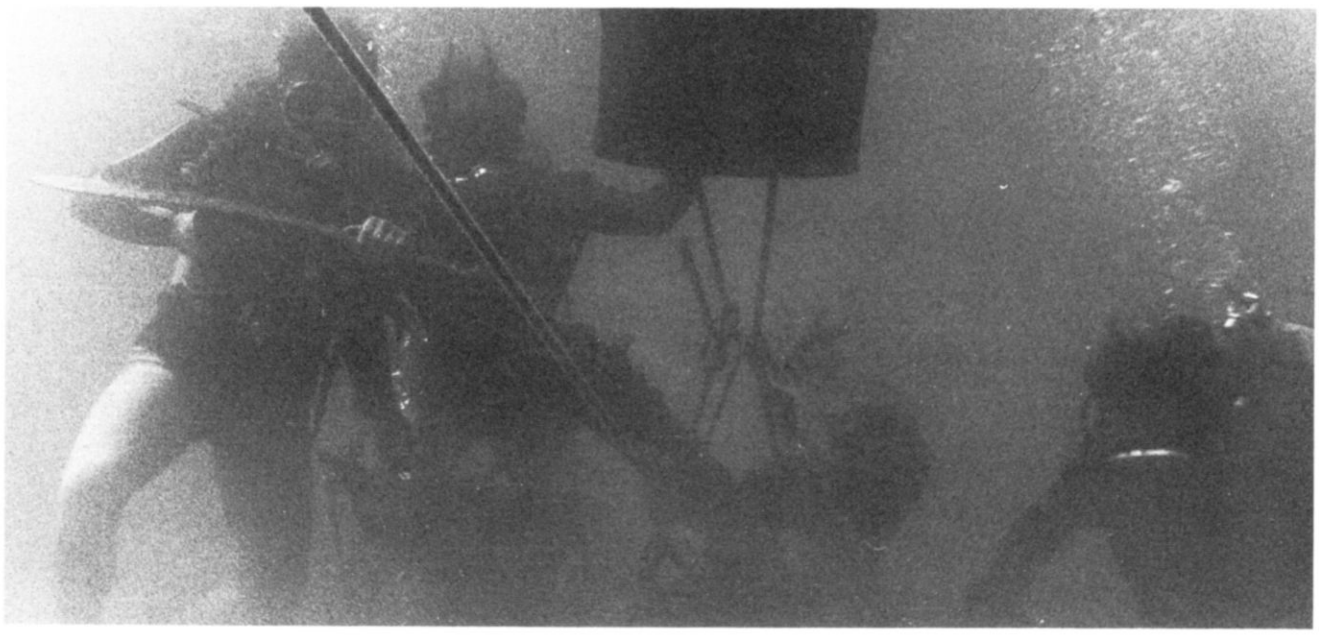
Meanwhile, late that afternoon, we were keeping a look out from high up on the Rock for the return of the *Fantasia* as she rounded Europa Point. Having spotted her familiar shape we motored down to Coaling Island to meet her. Naturally we were thrilled to see the huge propeller lashed upright to the foredeck and no time was lost in transferring it ashore.

Early the following morning the editor personally informed the Governor, General William Jackson R.E., of the successful outcome of the search. Being a Second World War historian himself, General Jackson shared our enthusiasm for the historic find almost exactly thirty-five years after the fatal crash (all but one month). Having made our report to the Governor we then had to dash to catch our waiting Trident for London.

Above: **A 40-gallon oil drum attached to the boss is filled with compressed air from the diver's air tanks. Diver is Senior Aircraftman 'Taff' Bird.**



Above: **The line from the Fantasia was then used to tow the suspended propeller** *photo below* **to safer water prior to bringing it to the surface by the addition of life jackets.**

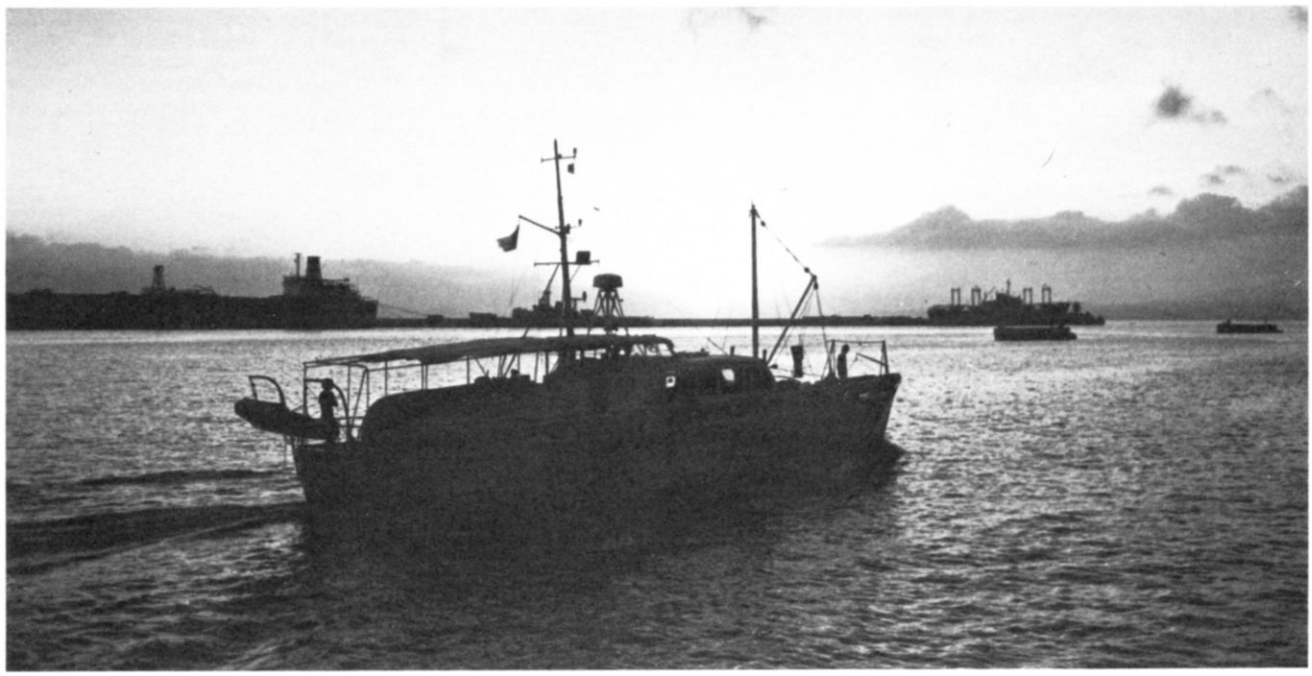


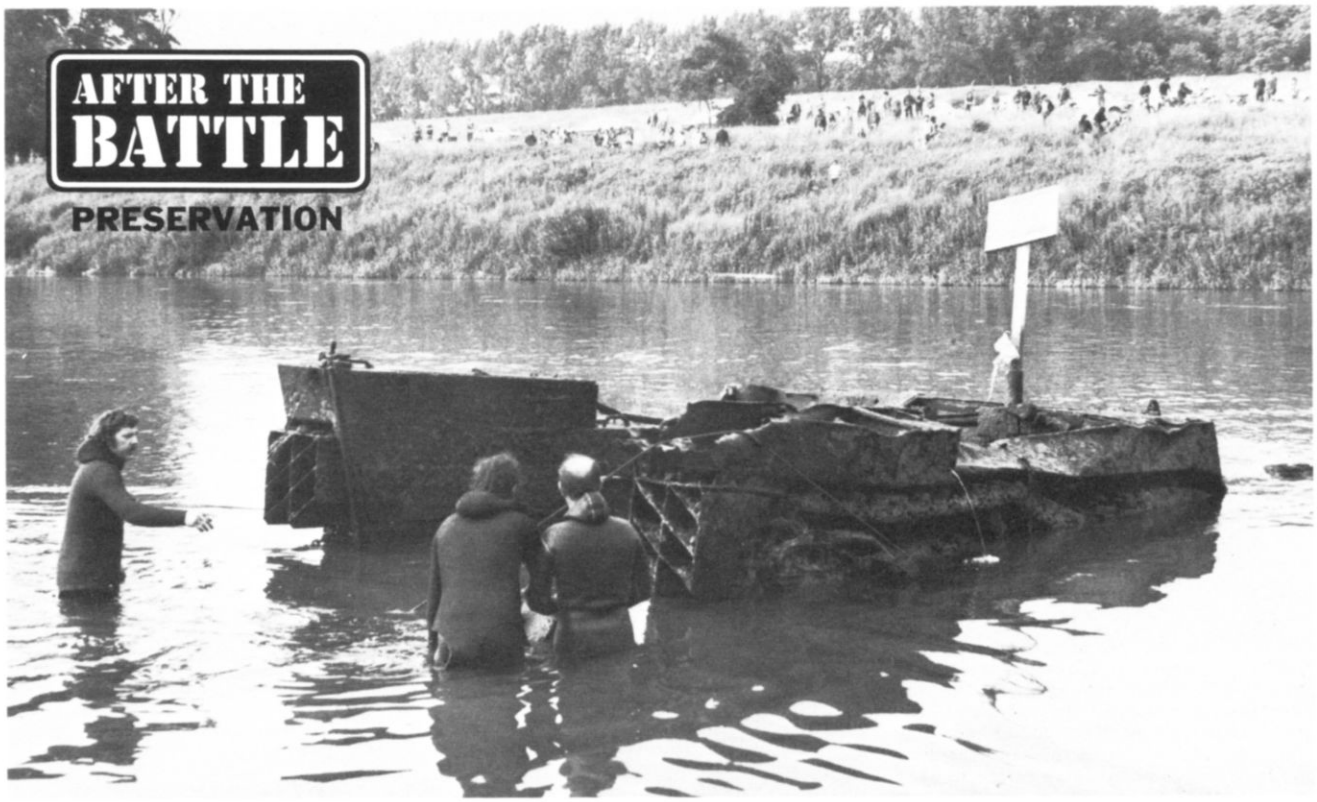
Using the Fantasia's derrick, the prop is winched aboard.

On our return to England, we contacted Hamilton Standard in the United States for confirmation of the type of propeller and they replied as follows: 'We are pleased to advise that the photographs show that this was a model 23E50 Hamilton Standard Hydromatic Propeller manufactured by our plant which was located in East Hartford, Connecticut. The propeller shown in your photographs indicates that it incorporated our model 6353 aluminum blade design which would lead us to believe that the Liberator aircraft was produced by Consolidated Airplane Company of San Diego, California during the early part of World War II. This is because around 1942 we changed the Liberator blade design to our model 6477 which had a much wider planform for increased take-off performance. The 23E50 Hamilton Standard Hydromatic Propeller incorporated selectable constant speed and full feather features which were accomplished by utilizing the engine oil as the hydraulic medium for these functions.

Although the editor considered that the Sikorski Museum in London would be an appropriate resting place for our find, due consideration had to be given to local feelings and it was decided that the propeller should be divided so that part could remain in Gibraltar as a fitting memorial to the General, his Staff and the RAF crew who died there serving the Allied cause.

Back at Coaling Island, the huge propeller is swung ashore. *Below:* **Her task accomplished, like the traditional 'rider of the range', the Fantasia steams off into the sunset.**





THE RIVER MAAS BUFFALO

'In 1945 there were three weapons in the Allied armoury to solve the problem of rapid river crossings' wrote General Sir Alan Jolly, commander of the 144th Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps. 'These were airborne forces and two types of tracked amphibian — the DD swimming tank and the Buffalo. It was the combination of all these three weapons in a new river crossing technique which was to provide a build-up across the Rhine in such overwhelming strength and with such speed that the Germans could do nothing effective against it.'

As soon as General Sir Miles Dempsey, the British Second Army Commander, had made his plan for Operation Plunder — The Rhine crossing — he entrusted the 79th Armoured Division with the task of evolving a suitable technique. This was to be worked out in conjunction with the Commander of 12 Corps, Lieutenant-General Neil Ritchie, whose headquarters was to mount the operation. It was foreseen that there would have to be a necessary training period for engineer troops, especially those taking part with Buffaloes, storm boats and rafts and for those men whose task was the construction of bridges and booms. This was difficult to arrange as most engineer troops were heavily committed either in Operation Veritable (Battle of the Rhineland) or on the construction of the twelve bridges over the River Maas to open communications to the Rhine. However by replacing British and Canadian engineer units by American engineers as Veritable drew to a close and by cutting down maintenance of roads to a bare minimum, all engineer units received about one week of training.

Accordingly, after a suitable training area had been found (it lay a few miles north of Maastricht on the river Maas) a trials Wing was set up bearing the letter 'G'. Colonel H. D. Drew, who was in charge, had the broadly defined charter of supervising all trials and training connected with assault river crossing. Together with General Ritchie, he set up headquarters in Eisden near the river bank in preparation for the task ahead.

On January 29, 1945, the 33rd Armoured Brigade (Brigadier H. B. Scott) came under command. The Brigade's three regiments consisted of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry (Lieutenant-Colonel D. Forster); the East Riding Yeomanry (Lieutenant-Colonel T. C. Williamson) and the 144th RAC commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Jolly. (On March 1, the 144th assumed the historic title of the '4th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment' — a name which had been held in abeyance for three years following the capture of the original 4th RTR at the fall of Tobruk in 1942).

The 33rd Armoured Brigade, which had thus far fought the campaign with Sherman tanks, was now to be re-equipped and re-trained with Buffaloes — the huge, lumbering, tracked carriers able to transport a platoon of infantry, a vehicle, gun or four tons of stores across a river propelled by its specially-designed tracks.

The Buffalo LVT existed in two forms, the Mk II and IV. The LVT II had no door and so could only normally carry personnel. Any stores carried had to be loaded into and unloaded from a deep well. It could, however, carry a 17 pounder on top and some personnel in the well by a modification which could be put in or removed within half-an-hour in an LVT Collecting Area.

The LVT IV had a door which could be lowered and a loading capacity of four tons and could take the following vehicles: Jeep,

Lieutenant-General Brian G. Horrocks, Commander of 30 Corps (in duffle coat in centre) with other officers watch a Buffalo demonstration in March 1945 on the River Maas.

Buffaloes in the exercise area. Photo gives a good idea of their high silhouette.

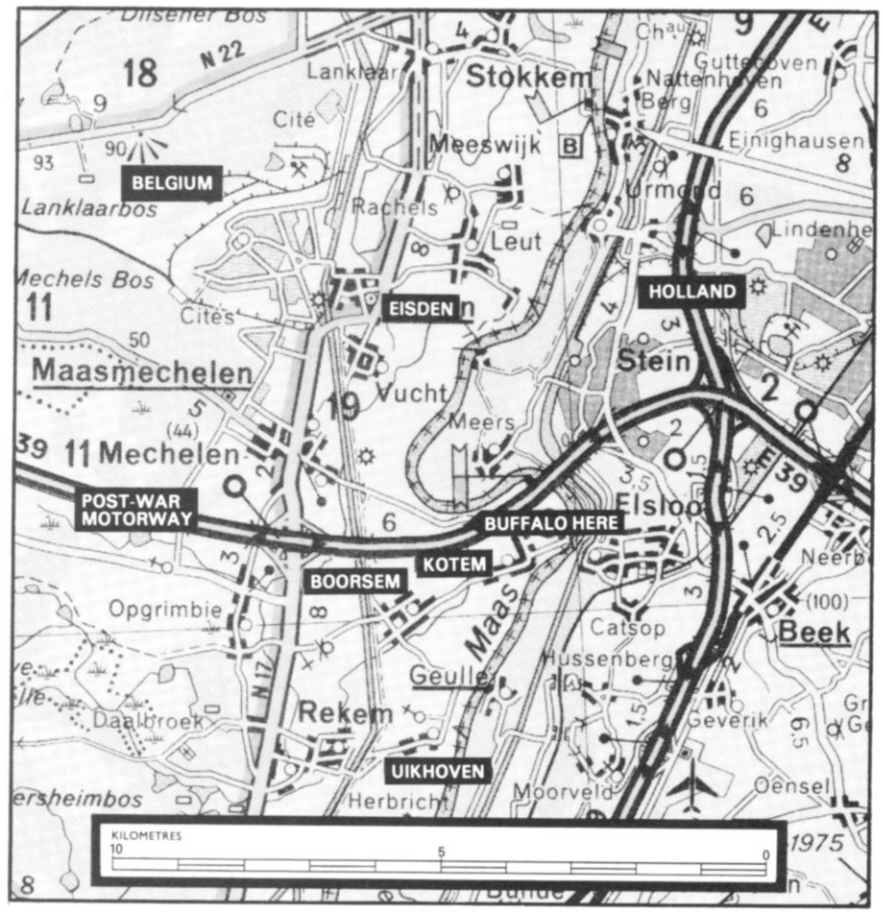
Scout Car (Dingo), Carrier, Weasel, Airborne Bulldozer or 6-pdr anti-tank gun

Both types carried light armour in front only. Buffaloes had a very low profile in the water but were badly silhouetted on top of the river banks. About a third of the total number of Buffaloes carried 20mm Polsten guns. The maximum road speed was 30 mph and 5.9 mph in water. They could tackle a gradient of 29 degrees except in deep mud when they stuck owing to the fact that they had only two feet belly clearance. They were notorious for picking up wire which wrecked their steering. This needed watching both on their approach track and in the river. Any sort of wire — telephone cable or fence wire — had to be avoided like the plague.

Buffaloes were very noisy and could only go very short distances on a road or any hard surface owing to their cup-shaped tracks which gave them their high performance in water. They cut any road to ribbons and completely wrecked the shoulders of narrow roads.

Between January 20 and 25, the 33rd Brigade's Shermans were loaded onto trains and transported to 'cold storage' in Brussels ready for re-issue after the Rhine had been crossed. On the 27th, the 144th Regiment moved to the training area, RHQ and the HQ Squadron being billeted in Boorsem, A and C Squadrons at Uikhoven and B Squadron in Kotem.

At the point on the Maas (or Meuse in French) chosen for training, the river forms the frontier between Belgium and Holland (see map), the troops being billeted in villages on the Belgian left-bank. General Jolly later wrote that 'work started in earnest on February 1 and by the 21st the first stage had been completed. The crews were by then proficient in handling their ungainly craft on land and in the water. Now we had to learn how to load infantry, vehicles, weapons and stores efficiently and quickly and how to carry them across a river so that they would land on



Reproduced from the 3rd Edition, 1974, of Michelin map Sheet No. 2.

Left: The shop where the unlucky crew were billeted in March 1945. *Above:* The same shop in September 1977 — ex-Trooper John Shearer is in the middle.

Left: **Trooper Philip Harding, 4th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment.** *Above:* **September 4, 1977. Members of the Tank committee — Francois Driessen, Jos Calsius and Guido Horrix — pay tribute at Philip's grave in Kruisveld Cemetery.**

the far bank, not in confusion, as could so easily happen in the dark, but tactically disposed and ready to fight'.

Elementary loading and unloading drill with infantry of the 1st Norfolks was first carried out while the detailed method of carrying out the operation was demonstrated diagrammatically on a model at an indoor exercise on February 14/15 until all officers and senior NCOs understood the technique to be used. This exercise was followed on March 2 by a full scale brigade group trial carried out first by day and then by night on the section of the Maas specially selected to resemble as far as possible the stretch of the Rhine already chosen for the assault. The results of these studies were made available in a series of 'Technique Instructions' which were issued by HQ 12 Corps during the early part of March, and provided the training doctrine for all formations and units taking part in the assault.

The training progressed without casualties until the night of March 5. The Maas was in full spate and had overflowed its banks when a Buffalo with its four-man crew attempted a night crossing. Half-way across the Buffalo struck an underwater obstruction which stopped the motor. Drifting helpless downstream in the fast flowing river, the driver desperately attempted to restart the engine. Unable to do so the Buffalo began to fill with water and, after a minute or two, disappeared under the surface. The vehicle commander and Trooper John Shearer, the wireless operator, managed to swim to safety but Troopers Stanley Clark, the driver, and Philip Harding (co-driver-gunner) were drowned.

Despite a search of the river and its banks no trace could be found of the missing men.

A Tank Committee sign claiming the sunken Buffalo for 'Bemong'.

Three weeks later Trooper Harding's body was washed ashore and buried at Hasselt Kruisveld Communal Cemetery (Row B, Grave 14). Trooper Clark's body was never found and, when the Groesbeek Memorial was unveiled on June 2, 1956 by His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, his name was included on Panel 1 in the roll of the 1,103 Commonwealth servicemen missing during the advance from the river Seine through the Low Countries and into Germany between August 30, 1944 and May 5, 1945 and who have no known graves.

In 1946, Philip Harding's father returned to the Continent to seek out the spot where his son had died. To his amazement the tip of the Buffalo was clearly visible sticking out of the water on the Dutch side of the river.

Thirty-one years later the wife of one of the members of the Belgian sub-aqua club 'Jaws' from Maasmechelen told her husband of the accident. As she was only twelve at the time, her story was received rather sceptically by

Groesbeek Memorial in Holland.

other members of the club but she was so adamant that, in the end, they agreed to make a search. The Buffalo was eventually discovered near the span of the E39 motorway which had been built across the river after the war. Conveniently for the Belgian club, the Buffalo had 'miraculously' returned to the Belgian side of the river when they re-discovered it! (This 'act of God' subsequently became a sore point with the Dutch on the eastern bank).

The local Belgian community of Kotem (the nearest village to the river) decided to form a 'Tank' committee to be given the task of organising the recovery of the Buffalo. Jos Calsius was appointed as a liaison member of the 'Jaws' club, the others being Guido Horrix, Guy Bemong and Francois Driessen. It was largely due to the generosity of the two latter-named committee members who loaned heavy equipment and put up most of the money, that the Buffalo, a Mk IV, was successfully recovered from the river on June 5, 1977 watched by an estimated crowd of 5,000 lining the river banks and motorway above. Transported to a nearby factory — St. Barbara Maasmechelen — the Buffalo was washed out, sandblasted and repainted with the eventual idea of returning it to a spot beside the river where it could remain as a permanent memorial to the two men who had lost their lives in it in 1945. This plan was approved and arrangements were made by the Tank Committee for an impressive unveiling to be held, coincidentally, on the anniversary of the outbreak of the war — September 3.

With only a few weeks before the ceremony was to take place, the Tank Committee made every effort to trace the names and survivors of the Buffalo's crew. One Sunday morning in August they flew to London to check out an old address given them by the owner of the local village store in Kotem where they discovered the crew had been billeted. When they arrived at the address on the Great West Road, to their disappointment they found that the house had seen two changes of ownership since the war. Nevertheless the present occupants proved very willing to help trace 'Mr. Harding' and, two weeks before the unveiling was due to take place, James Harding, Philip's brother, received a surprise telephone call from Belgium. Luckily the Harding family had kept in contact with one of the survivors from the accident, ex-Trooper John Shearer living in Aberdeen, Scotland, and the committee, overjoyed at having traced one of the actual crew, quickly arranged for him to attend the ceremony.

On September 3, in the presence of James Harding (Philip's father had unfortunately suffered a stroke and was unable to travel), the Burgermeister, local dignitaries, members of the sub-aqua club and thousands of spectators, the Buffalo was unveiled by John Shearer on its concrete base. The vehicle had been christened 'Jimmy' as it was believed that the nickname of the other crewman that had died, Trooper Stan Clark, was 'Jimmy Hocus-Pocus'.

When the Buffalo had been dragged from the river in June, one of the spectators had been another ex-serviceman, Charles Porter, who had married a Belgian girl after the war and was now living in Zonhoven. Mr. Porter had been a Buffalo driver and had been exercising on the river training site on the morning of the fatal accident and so had a personal interest in the affair. With the help of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Mr. Porter had been endeavouring to trace the family of Stanley Clark. An appeal for help published in the *Swinton Journal*, the local newspaper in Trooper Clark's home town in Lancashire, was spotted by his daughter Mrs. Maureen Robinson and through her Mr. Porter located his widow, Mrs. Elsie Owen, since remarried. At the time of the accident she had received a letter from the War Office telling her that her husband was missing but the exact details of his death had remained a mystery to the family until they were traced. With the news of the recovery of the Buffalo by the Belgians, a civic reception was held at Swinton Town Hall in memory of Trooper Clark.

A year later Philip Harding's father, now in his 80th year, was well enough to return to the Maas which he had last seen during his early post-war visit and his son James accompanied him on his pilgrimage. On reaching the river he found the Buffalo standing near the water's edge pointing towards Germany — a tragic yet fitting memorial to two young lives lost.

A father remembers . . . August 1978, thirty-three years after the accident, Mr. Harding returns.